

Annual report of the
Merton Safeguarding Children Board
2018/19



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1.0

Chair's Introduction

2018-2019 has been a time of considerable change for Merton. In May 2018 we welcomed Rachael Wardell as the new Director of Children, Schools and Families, following the departure of her predecessor Yvette Stanley. We also saw the reorganisation of Merton Clinical Commissioning Group so that they are now part of the South West London Alliance which includes Merton, Wandsworth, Richmond and Kingston. In addition, our colleagues in the Metropolitan Police moved into Basic Command Units, so that Merton is part of a four-borough command structure which includes Wandsworth, Richmond and Kingston.

I am pleased to say that our partnership remains strong and that we are all committed to the key tasks of safeguarding children and promoting their welfare, as well as being assured of the quality and effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding practice across Merton.

The Board's strengths are identified as follows:

- The MSCB is a mature partnership that is open to learning and challenge
- There is senior representation and engagement from agencies
- The MSCB continues to have a relentless focus on working together to keep children safe
- Excellent multi-agency representation at the Annual conference and comprehensive multi-agency safeguarding training programme.
- The Board has clear priorities with an aligned work programme that supports their delivery.

The areas identified for additional attention are as follows:

- We need to strengthen our focus on performance, ensuring that we are able to monitor our progress against key performance areas
- To strengthen our ability to evidence the impact of our work on the lived experience of children and young people. In order to address this, the MSCB will review and refresh its quality assurance and performance framework.
- Embedding the new Partnership arrangements.

Our agreed areas of focus during 2018-2019 were:

1. Managing the arrangements for the transition from Merton Local Safeguarding Children Board to the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership

Across England, local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs) will undergo the most significant change since their inception. Following on from the Wood Review and the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the Board will see the dissolution of LSCBs and the establishment of Safeguarding Children Partnerships. In addition to reviewing the progress that the Board has made to date, we will need to develop clear plans about the future shape and direction of the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership. To achieve this, a multi-agency task and finish group was established. The purpose of this group is to develop proposals for the new arrangements for the formation of the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership, in accordance with the Children and Social Work Act 2017. We provide a statement regarding the work of the Partnership task and finish group in section 2.1 of this report.

2. Think Family - to support children and adults in our most vulnerable families to reduce risk and ensure improved outcomes.

The Board is seeking to drive improvements in our practice with vulnerable families so that stigma is reduced and families with poor mental health and substance misuse issues will feel confident in seeking help and support. We are also seeking assurance that practitioners are supported with the skills and confidence required to engage with all types of families. This work includes

- Up-skilling practitioners so that they are able to use a range of strategies and techniques to effectively engage children and families; including demonstrating an understanding of the barriers to effective engagement and work with families to overcome these.
- Ensuring, that practitioners are alert to practitioner biases related to social class, affluence, ethnicity and other factors so that all families receive a child-centred proactive response.

The Board is also seeking to further strengthen the role of education as a critical part of the team around the family.



3. Supporting Vulnerable Adolescents - developing a strategic response to adolescent risk and vulnerability.

We know that, for some young people, adolescence is a time of particular vulnerability. We are determined to support adolescents who are at risk of:

- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE),
- Children who go missing from home/school/care
- Children and young people who are at risk radicalisation and violent extremism,
- Children at risk of serious youth violence and gangs
- Children at risk of criminal and other forms of exploitation including county lines, peer on peer abuse and harmful sexual behaviour.
- Self-harm and poor mental health including risk of suicide

The Board is seeking to develop a strategic response to Contextual Safeguarding. In particular we are seeking to develop a coordinated response to adolescent risk/harm which occurs outside of the family home in spaces such as the neighbourhood, school, community centres and housing estates.

The Board would also like to be more systematic regarding its work in listening to children and allowing them to shape the services that are provided to them. The Merton User Voice Strategy outlines the variety of ways in which the views and opinions of children and young people are collected and responded to. The Board wants to ensure that children's voice and experience is an integral part of its quality assurance activities so that the impact of our work with children, young people and their families is measured effectively.

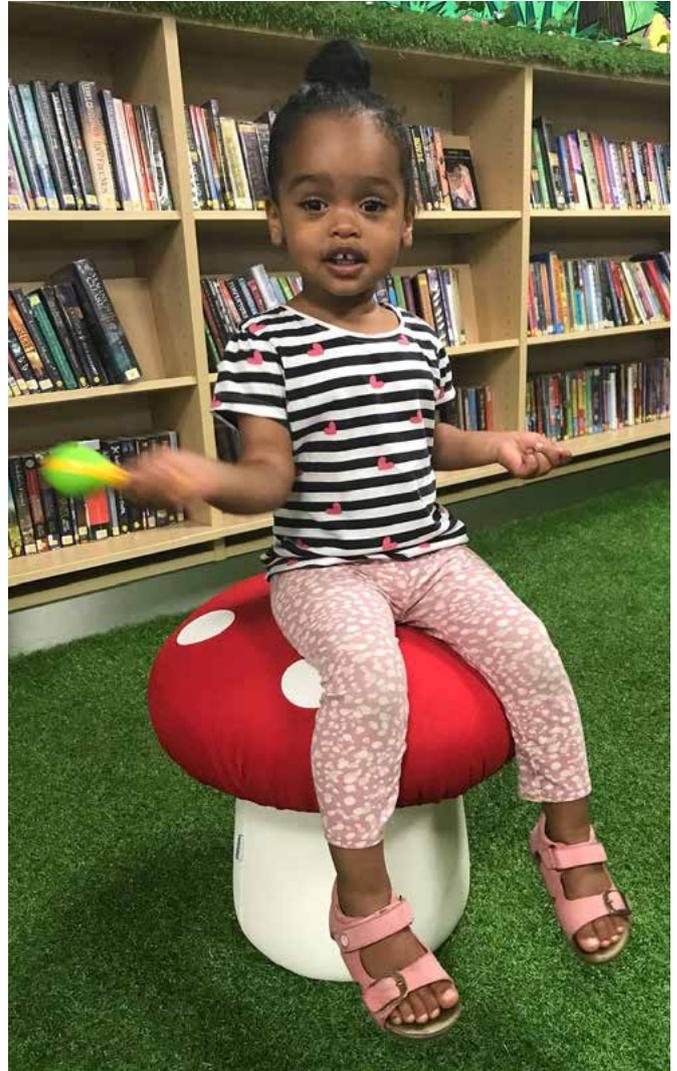
4. Early Help - To develop an early help system that is responsive, and effectively provides help to prevent the escalation of concerns.

Merton has reviewed its Children Young People and Families Well-Being Model. We are now reviewing our Early Help and Preventative work; in particular we are exploring models for coordinating preventative and early help across the well-being model. As part of our review we will:

- Consider the interface between our Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Early Help arrangements
- Review our service offer at all levels of the Model and Engage partners in discussions on thresholds,
- Clarify Step-Up Step Down processes and the tools to support early help assessments and interventions (including alignment with Signs of Safety/signs of well-being and the Merton Practice Model)
- Review our partnership quality assurance of early help.

I would like to thank all of the MSCB partner agencies for their hard work and continued commitment to making a difference for Merton's children, young people and their families.

Keith Makin
MSCB Chair
January 2020



2.0

Progress of MSCB Business Plan 2018-19

This section is a progress update regarding what has been achieved so far, as well as, an indication of the work that still needs to be done in relation to the Business Plan.

2.1 Managing transition arrangements from the Merton Local Safeguarding Children Board to the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership

A task and finish group was established by the Business Implementation Group and commissioned to consult with members of the MSCB and key stakeholders to agree proposals for the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Agreement.

Between April 2018 and January 2019, the task and finish group met five times with membership including representation from:

- The London Borough of Merton
- Merton Clinical Commissioning Group
- The Police,
- Education
- Housing
- Public Health
- Voluntary organisations



The MSCB sought to build on an established track record of an outstanding Local Safeguarding Children Board and determined the following vision for the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership:

- Decisive strategic leadership provided by an independent person who will serve as the chair for the partnership
- The needs of children and their families to remain at the very centre of its work. This means that the Partnership will be intentional about listening to the voices of children, young people and their families; and, where appropriate, allowing their needs and concerns to inform service design and delivery. A young Independent scrutineer will be appointed to ensure effectiveness of this work.
- A strong culture of accountability and challenge that results in increased understanding across the partnership and measurable improvements in the quality of practice. This will be assured by the commissioning of an independent scrutineer who will review the performance of the partnership and its impact.
- A commitment from Statutory Partners Relevant Agencies and Co-opted members to the priority of safeguarding children and promoting their welfare, evident in their contribution to the work of the partnership
- Effective and consistent engagement by senior strategic leaders, who are able to influence safeguarding in their individual agencies
- Collaborative and effective working relationships between partners and relevant agencies with strong evidence of this at both strategic and operational levels
- Valued contributions and participation by voluntary sector and lay/co-opted members
- The work and priorities of the partnership is relevant and is informed by a detailed analysis of local need, to target and support the most vulnerable children

- The delivery of tangible, positive outcomes for children and their families
- A learning and improvement framework is committed to and underpinning continuous improvement in the quality of safeguarding practice

The final draft of the Partnership Agreement was presented to the Board for approval in March 2019. The agreement was approved by the Board and then submitted to the three Statutory Safeguarding Partners (the London Borough of Merton, Merton CCG and the Police) to be approved through their governance procedures between April and June 2019.

The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership is ambitious to continue as a robust multi-agency partnership that enables all children and young people to be safe in their homes and communities, and to fulfil their potential. The new Partnership will coordinate the work of all agencies and ensure that this work is effective in achieving the best outcomes for Merton's children and young people.

2.2 Think Family – to support children and adults in our most vulnerable families to reduce risk and ensure improved outcomes.

The Board's second priority for 2018-2019 was to support families with particular vulnerabilities such as:

- families facing domestic violence and abuse (DVA),
- mental health issues that impact on parenting,
- parents whose substance misuse put their child at risk of abuse or neglect
- parents whose physical or learning disabilities impact on their ability to effectively care for their children

The Board has also agreed that there will be a focus on neglect as a cross-cutting theme.

a) Domestic Violence and Abuse

The Board approved and published guidance to professionals regarding domestic violence and abuse in June 2018 which aims to:

- Protect children who are at risk of harm from witnessing and experiencing DVA
- Support the victims/survivors to assist them to protect themselves and their child/ren; and
- Hold the abusive partner accountable for their violent and coercive behaviour and to provide them with opportunities to change.

The agreed guidance is for use by all practitioners who have contact with children and with adults who are parents / carers, and who therefore have responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

The MSCPB works closely with Safer Merton in order to ensure that our response to DVA is joined-up and represents a genuinely think family approach.

b) Parental Mental Health

To improve the way that we work with families with parents whose poor mental health adversely affects their ability to care for their children, the MSCPB approved a Parental Mental Health Protocol. This protocol was drafted jointly by Merton Safeguarding Children Board, Merton Safeguarding Adults Board, and includes Merton Clinical Commissioning Group, and South West London and St Georges Mental Health Trust.

The protocol promotes good multi-agency working; including appropriate information sharing, joint assessment of need through the use of the Merton Child, Young Person and Family Well-Being Model and making effective use of Team Around the Family (TAF). The aim is to provide effective support for those parents with mental health problems, who are in need of additional help in caring for their children and young people. This work should be underpinned

by working in partnership with parents and children and applying a 'Think Family' approach.

The Parental Mental Health protocol is supported by an implementation plan which is monitored by the Board's Quality Assurance Sub-Group.

c) Work on Neglect

As part of the implementation of the MSCB's Neglect strategy, the MSCB's Training Officer developed a tool to assist multi-agency practitioners with the identification and assessment of neglect. In order to improve the effectiveness of our joint work in cases of neglect, it was agreed that the developed Evidence Based Neglect Screening Tool be piloted across Merton's safeguarding system.

The purpose of the pilot was to:

- test the effectiveness of the tool in deepening the understanding of multi-agency practitioners' understanding of neglect.
- test the effectiveness of the tool supporting practitioners in identifying and assessing child neglect.
- test the effectiveness of the tool in supporting the referral and escalation of cases to Children's Social Care
- test the effectiveness of the tool in discussing concerns about neglect with parents and carers
- test the 'usability' of the tool and to learn from practitioners how the tool can be improved.

The Quality Assurance Sub-group agreed that the tool would be piloted in the early help/preventative services, in accordance with the Merton Child and Family Well-being Model 2017, during the first part of 2018.



The Pilot included teams from the following service areas:

- Early Years overseen by the Early Years' Service Manager
- Community Health Services overseen by the Named Nurse CLCH London
- Transforming Families and family support service overseen by the Assistant Team Manager,
- An identified primary school namely Abbotsbury Primary School.

The feedback from the pilot was very positive.

The Evidence Based Neglect Screening Tool is not a tick-box process. Practitioners are required to evidence their concerns as well as providing evidence for what is working well for the family. Professionals can rate their concerns in each area but the strength of the rating sits with the evidence. The feedback from the pilot of the tool has demonstrated this strength.

Practitioners found the tool to be user-friendly, and for those who had the opportunity, a good communication tool that can be used when discussing concerns about neglect with families, which also supports the basis of a child centred intervention.

The tool has shown a number of benefits:

- Capturing the complex nature of neglect, giving practitioners the opportunity to focus and evidence specific areas of strengths and need.
- Effective for use with both children and young people.
- Useful in a multi-agency setting (Team Around the Child/Family, Child In Need, etc.) as a common framework for discussion.
- Highlights the different experiences of children in the same family, and the meaning of those children in the context of their own home.
- Valuable as a supervision tool to discuss in detail cases, particularly those cases where practitioners get stuck, as it helps highlight, with the aid of chronologies, the cumulative nature of neglect and its intrusive and pervasive impact on the lives of children.

Following the successful pilot of the tool, it was recommended that the Evidence Based Neglect Screening Tool, is adopted across agencies and practitioners working in Universal Services with children and families, Early Intervention and statutory intervention. The MSCB agreed with this recommendation and decided that the current MSCB Neglect Strategy be revised to include use of the neglect tool.

It is expected that the neglect strategy will be revised in 2019-2020.

2.3 Supporting Vulnerable Adolescents – developing a strategic response to adolescent risk and vulnerability.

As part of its work to support vulnerable adolescents, the MSCB approved a Multi-agency Risk, Vulnerability and Exploitation Protocol (MARVE). The MARVE Protocol sets out the multi-agency arrangements for identifying and responding to children, young people and families affected by exploitation in the London Borough of Merton. This protocol builds on the significant work already taking place within Merton and sets out how all agencies will work together to ensure the most effective and coordinated response to exploitation of children. The document draws from a number of current protocols and strategies to combine and integrate these into one Exploitation Protocol.

The protocol mandates the development of a MARVE Panel which will be a Multi-Agency Operational Panel responsible for coordinating information sharing and multi-agency interventions to disrupt and respond to child



sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour and serious youth violence. The MARVE Panel Meeting has been established to provide a comprehensive approach to tackling issues of exploitation and harm of or by children and young people across the Merton area. The MARVE Panel Meeting is the key mechanism for agreeing how relevant organisations will co-operate and work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in effectively tackling exploitation, vulnerability and risk. It is co-chaired by the Police and the Head of the Adolescent and Family Service within Children's Social Care.

The Panel combines the previous adolescent panels operated in the borough:

- Multiagency Child Sexual Exploitation (MASE)
- Persons of Concern (POC)
- Young Offender Management (YOM)
- Gangs Multi-agency Panel (GMAP)
- Transforming Families

The aim is to ensure a joined-up, multi-agency approach to all forms of child exploitation.

2.4 Early Help - To develop an early help system that is responsive and effectively prevents escalation of concerns.

Merton is committed to providing help to children and families at the earliest opportunity: early in the life of the problem and early in the life of the child. A great deal of work has been undertaken to ensure that our early help offer is responsive and effectively prevents the escalation of safeguarding concerns. In the summer months of 2019, Merton will be reshaping the Children, Schools and Families' early help work and service offer. A project board has been set up and a range of task and finish groups have been commissioned to steer our work over the next few months.

Throughout 2018 and early 2019, Merton has been reviewing the current early help offer for children and young people aged between 0 to 25 and their families, and how this is delivered and managed.

It is expected that the culmination of this this work will result in:

- An improved early help offer for families with children and young people age 0 – 25 which evidences outcomes and impact
- a proposed new Family Wellbeing Service which will bring together a range of functions from across different teams including : 0 to 5s Supporting Families Team, Bond Road, Transforming Families, the Short-breaks Service, Early Years and Common Assessment Practice Development, Family Information/Local Offer, Early Years Business Support and the Designated Safeguarding Leads and Advisor function for schools

The proposed new Family Wellbeing Service will have its own "front door" and receive referrals as well as enquiries. The service will have a navigation function within the MASH and there will be close liaison to ensure best practice and robust decision making around the application of thresholds.

Merton is very excited to be developing and enhancing our current early help offer which represents a very ambitious transformation programme and will involve several teams and functions across the Department. This significant shift means early help will be the forthcoming Merton Safeguarding Children's Partnership's first priority for 2019-2021.

3.0

Local context and need of the childhood population for Merton¹

3.1 Merton the place

Merton is an outer London borough situated to the south west of central London, neighbouring the boroughs of Croydon, Kingston, Lambeth, Sutton and Wandsworth. The London Borough of Merton is comprised of 20 wards and covers an area of approximately 14.7 square miles and at 2018, has a population of just over 209,000 residents living in 84,000 properties.

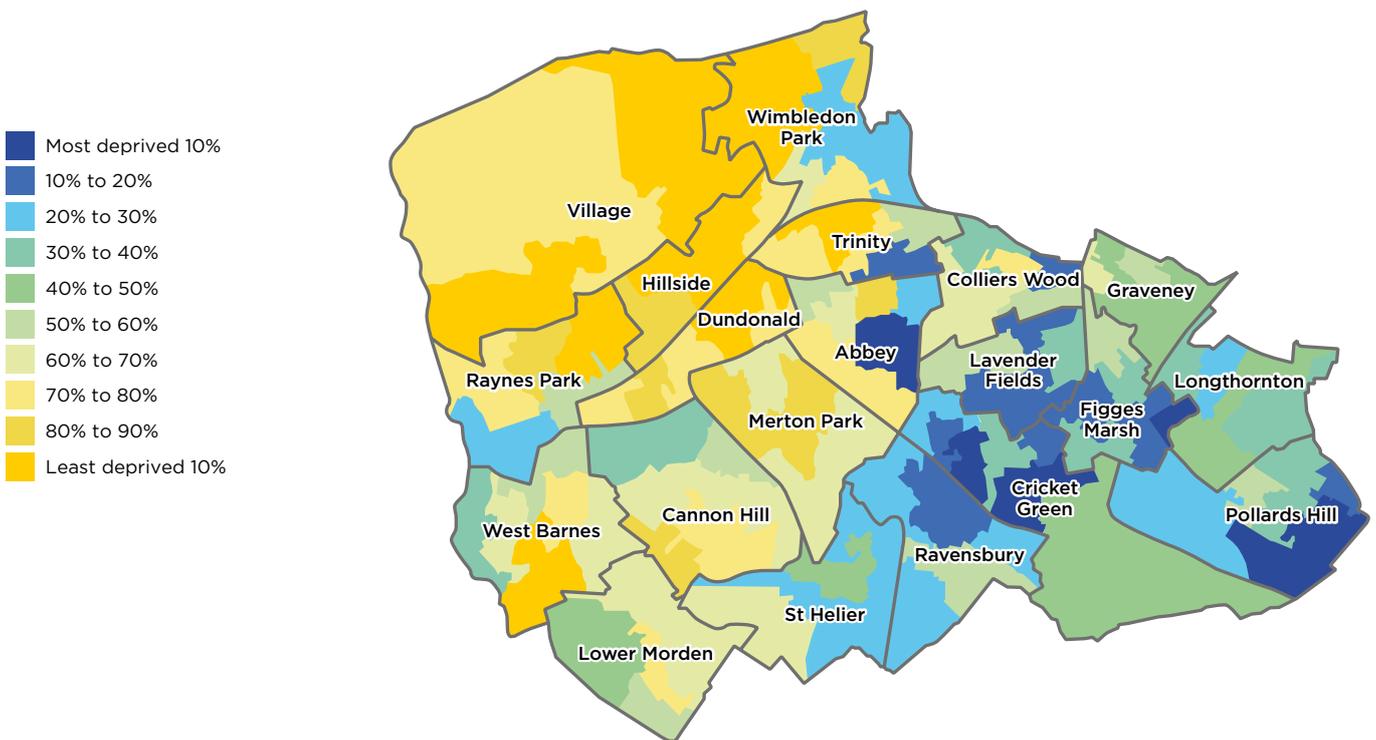
- Primary school children aged between 5 and 10 will have increased by 20%,
- Secondary school children, aged 11 to 15 will have increased by 13%.

Historically there was a 40% net increase in births from 2,535 in 2002 to a peak of 3507 in 2012 and is approximated to be at 3178 by 2020. The birth rate, together with other demographic factors such as migration of families into the borough,

has already created the need for more school places, and puts pressure on early years and pre-school services, children’s social care and early intervention.

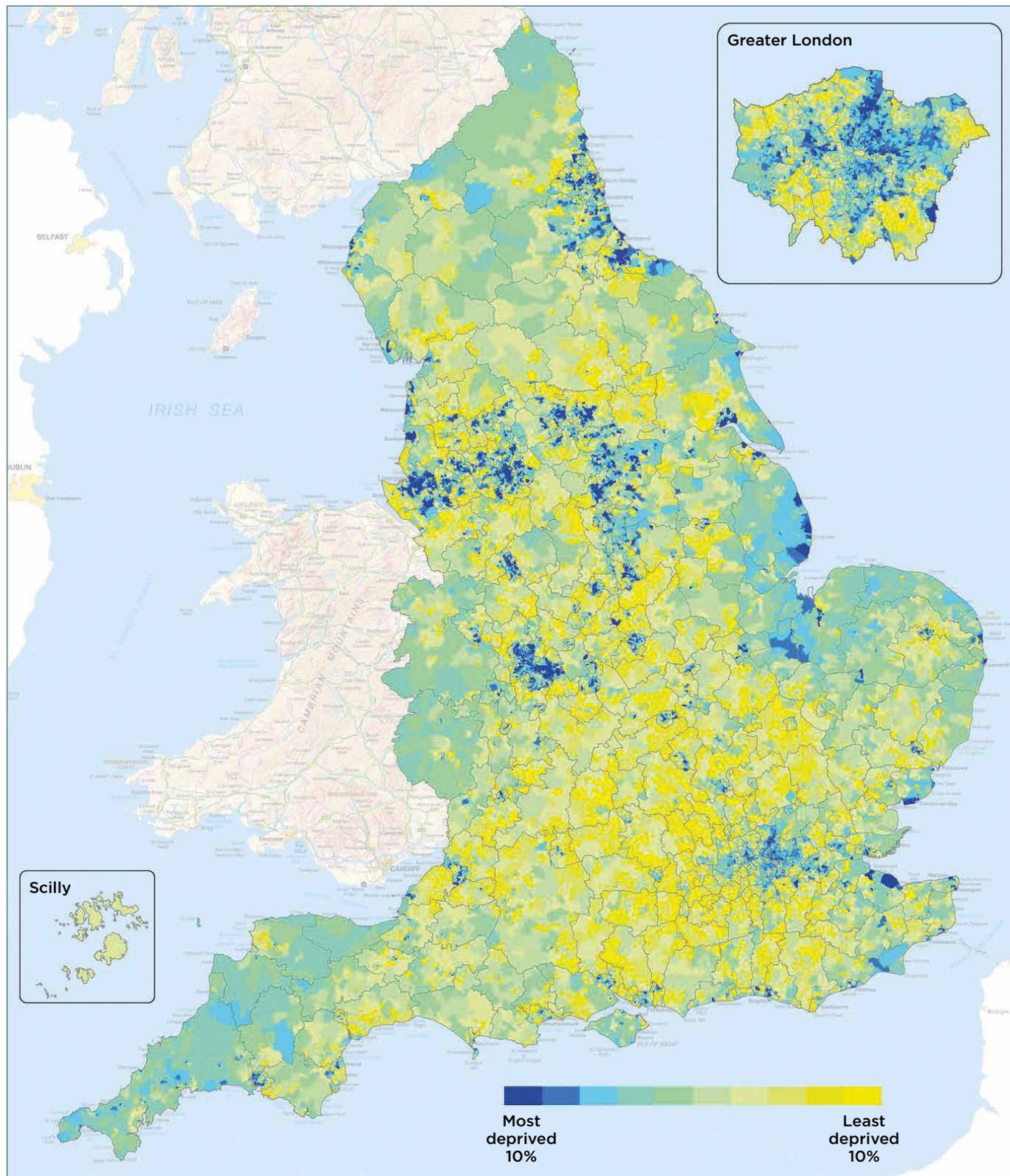
Predominantly suburban in character, Merton has three main town centres; Wimbledon, Mitcham and Morden. There are pockets of deprivation within the borough mainly in the eastern wards and some smaller pockets in the central wards (Mitcham and Morden towns). These wards have multiple deprivations, with high scores on income deprivation, unemployment and limited educational attainment. Five of Merton’s 20 wards are amongst the 30% most deprived areas across England for children. This means 37% of Merton school pupils are living in an area of deprivation (30% most deprived, IDACI 2015). Since 2010 we have seen an increase of 32% of children who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) (2010, 2881 children, 2016, 3817 FSM children).

Merton Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index 2015



¹ Statistical information regarding the demographic profile of the Borough is based on the 2011 Census

UK Indices of Deprivation



Merton has a rich mix of ethnicity, culture, and languages. GLA data at 2018 puts Merton's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population as 76,800, meaning BAME groups make up just under 38% of the population

Like many councils across the country, over the past few years the council has experienced a significant increase in EHCPs (Education and Health Care Plans) for SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) children and related placements. The number of Merton pupils with an EHCP has grown over the last five years at a faster rate than London, Statistical Neighbours and National averages. In January 2018, there were 1490 pupils attending Merton Schools with an EHCP; as at January 2019 this number increased to 1769, representing an increase of 279 EHCPs.

Table 1: Number of Recorded EHCPs - Merton Residents

Jan' 2016	Jan' 2017	Jan' 2018	Jan' 2019
1075	1242	1490	1769

3.2 Merton's Children in Need, Children with a Protection Plan and those Looked After

3.2.1 Children In Need

Merton's Child in Need (CIN) rate per 10,000 as at the 31st March 2019 is 287.7; this is lower than the London average of 350.7 and is also lower than the National average of 334.2. We are also lower than our statistical neighbours (SN)² who are at 299.33. See table 2 below

Table 2: Increases in CIN rate between 2013 and 2018

Year	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	Merton 2018-19	SN 2018-19	London 2018-19	National 2018-19
CIN Rate	355	338	411	287	439	288	299	351	334

Source: LAIT Characteristics of Children in Need, 2018-2019 Main Tables



² According to the Children's Services Statistical Neighbour Benchmarking Tool, Merton's statistical neighbours are Barnet, Ealing, Enfield, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Kingston Upon Thames, Reading, Redbridge, Sutton and Wandsworth.

3.2.2 Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan

Rates of Children subject to a Child Protection Plan in Merton in 2018-2019 is slightly higher than the London rate which is 84.1; the Merton rate is 84.4. Merton remains lower than the national rate which is 99.3. Merton is higher than the rates of our statistical neighbours who are at 76.8. Please see table 3 below.

Table 3: Rate of Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan

Year	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	Merton 2018-19	SN 2018-19	London 2018-19	National 2018-19
Rate per 10,000	29.9	27.2	53.8	84.4	76.8	84.1	99.3

Source: LAIT Characteristics of Children in Need, 2018-2019 Main Tables

As at 31st March 2019, the number of children subject to a child protection plan in Merton was 220. The number of children who started on a plan during the year 2018-2019 was 202. The number of children subject to a child protection plan for the second or subsequent time was 35.

3.2.3 Looked After Children

Merton continues to have a population of looked after children with a high proportion of adolescent young people. Whilst a high number of these young people are unaccompanied asylum seekers, factors such as housing and anti-social behaviour are also impacting on the number of adolescents in our care.

On 31st March 2019, there were 157 looked after children. This compares to 154 looked after children in 2018. In the year 2018-19 there were 72 new admissions into care. This represents a 19% decrease on 2017-18. A large proportion of starters (48) were aged 16 and over. This is double the national proportion of starters in this age range. Merton's rate per 10,000 population remains stable and we continue to have one of the lowest population rates nationally (here are only six (four in London) local authorities with a rate per 10,000 less than Merton).



Table 4: Numbers and rates of children looked after as at 31st March

England and London totals are rounded to the nearest 10.

	2015		2016		2017		2018		2019	
	Number	Rate per 10,000								
Merton	156	34	163	35	152	33	154	33	157	15
London	9,980	52	9,860	51	9,900	50	9,890	49	5,480	27
National	69,470	60	70,400	60	72,590	62	75,420	64	31,680	27

Table 5: Number of Children who started to be Looked After during the year ending 31st March

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Merton	107	122	100	86	72
% increase / decrease year on year	-6%	14%	-18%	-14%	-16.3%

Source: SSDA 903. 2018-2019

In 2019 there were 324 placements. Children are looked after in a variety of settings; foster care, children's homes, residential special schools, and a small number are in hospital settings. Some children in our care are placed in secure settings. At 31 March 2019, 72% of looked after children were placed in foster care. This is just below the national figure of 73%. 44% children were placed with in house foster carers, representing 144 placements. This is a decrease on the previous year. This continues to be an area of scrutiny for us due to the impact on budget, but also due the fact that agency placements are often outside of the borough. The most common use of agency placements is for adolescents, as a number of our in house carers are approved to take foster children up to the age of 10 years only. The Access to Resources Service is committed to targeted recruitment of foster carers who are approved to care for teenage children. However, this is a pan-London issue, with many agencies and Local Authorities competing for a small number of eligible carers.

The DfE SSD903 return gathers 'in touch' information for all care leavers aged 19, 20 and 21 years. For this return the definition is that there is 'contact' between your local authority and the young person eligible for care leaver support around 3 months before and one month after the young person's birthday.

Table 6: Care Leavers in Touch

Merton	Number	%	%
Yes	110	86%	88%
No	5	4%	7%
Service No Longer Required	12	9%	2%
Young Person Refuses Contact	1	1%	3%
Young Person Returned Home	0	0%	Not available

Source: SSDA 903. 2018-2019

Table 7: Percentage of Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training

The percentage of care leavers who were in education, employment or training

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Merton	44%	58%	60%	45%	79%
National	Not Available	49%	50%	51%	59%

Source: SSDA 903. 2018-2019

The number total number of care leavers in Merton as of 31st March 2019 was 33 young people. The number of these young people who were engaged in employment, education or training is 26 representing approximately 79% of care leavers. This represents a significant increase which is partly due to the relatively low numbers of young people involved; as table 7 shows, this is a national trend.

Care Leavers in Suitable accommodation

Accommodation is to be regarded as suitable if it provides safe, secure and affordable provision for young people.

Table 8: Percentage of Care Leavers in Suitable Accommodation

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Merton	66%	80%	91%	87%	88%
London	83%	82%	79%	81%	83%
National	81%	83%	84%	84%	85%

Source: SSDA 903. 2018-2019

3.3 Children at Risk of Sexual Exploitation: Summary Activity to address CSE in 2018 and 2019

In early 2018, a review of Adolescent Panels was undertaken to consider opportunities for streamlining the attendance and potential duplication across the partnership. This review incorporated interviews of chairs and scrutiny of membership and case lists across Multiagency Sexual Exploitation, Missing, Children Missing Education, Youth Offender Management, Gang Multiagency, Transforming Families, Looked After Children and Antisocial Behaviour panels. The review supported an integration of most of the panels overseeing adolescent risk, vulnerability and exploitation.

Furthermore, PPYP commissioned the Board Manager and the CSE Lead to undertake a piece of work to help the Sub-Group to understand why there are so few boys identified as being at risk of CSE. This found that vulnerable boys experience multiple forms of exploitation that does not readily 'fit' into the CSE framework. The mapping identified that groups of boys are exposed to multiple forms of harm and exploitation. Our current responses look at these boys as perpetrators but not as victims.

In addition, these young people are considered at a range of different panels which review part of the risk (normally around offending) but not the

whole risk (especially not victimisation). When this group of boys are considered as victims of multiple forms of exploitation, it is clear that their needs, as vulnerable boys, are not currently being fully assessed or met. There is a need for early intervention when these children are younger. There is strong evidence that targeting begins when children are of primary school age.

Also in 2018, Children's Social Care and the MSCB were asked to review a number of cases where there had been sexual assaults on girls, perpetrated by girls. It became clear that the current harmful sexual behaviour protocol was not understood by all professionals in contact with these cases. It is believed that as a result of gender-bias the oversight of the risks posed by the girls that caused the harm was potentially missed.

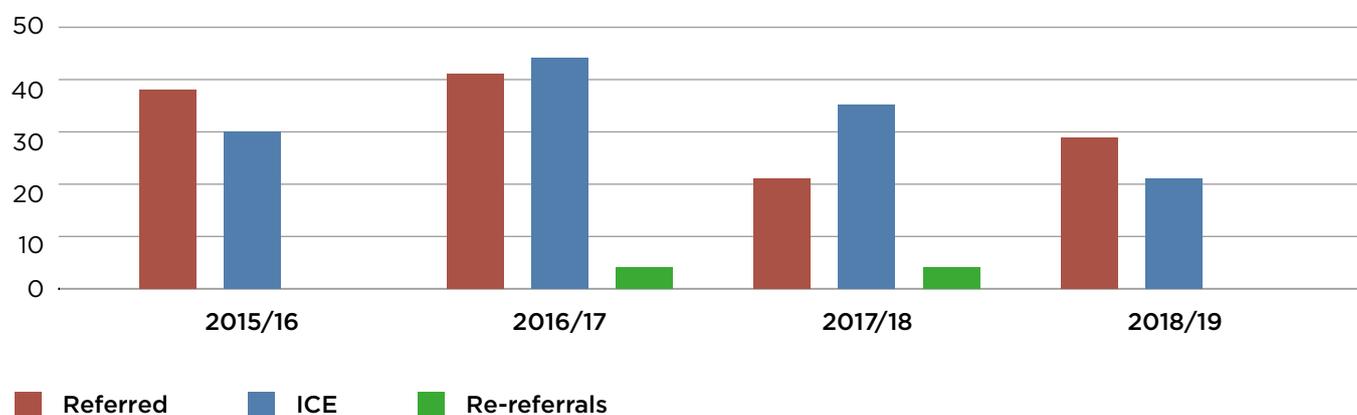
The analyses of these activities lead to an Exploitation Paper being presented to PPYP and the MSCB and the development of the Multiagency Risk, Vulnerability and Exploitation (MARVE) Protocol and Panel, endorsed by the MSCB Business Implementation Group.

Over the past 4 years we have maintained an average of 32 referrals in regard to child sexual exploitation. Last year's referrals have increased compared to the year before but not as high as those prior. Positively there were no re-referrals. Last year has seen a lower rate of ICE (closed) cases, which may be due to a vacancy with a CSE worker and the case remaining open for the new worker to complete the work and some cases requiring monitoring at 'Low' having reduced from higher levels.

Numbers of referrals for child sexual exploitation:

- In 2015/16 referrals totalled 38 – the total iced cases was 30, re-referrals 0
- In 2016/17 referrals totalled 41 – the total iced cases was 44, re-referrals 4
- In 2017/18 referrals totalled 21 – the total iced cases was 35, re-referrals 4
- In 2018/19 referrals totalled 29 – the total iced cases was 21, re-referrals 0



Table 9: Child Sexual Exploitation Figures

The majority of referrals are girls with an average age of 14 years. However, last year saw the youngest being only 10 years old. Also 2018-2019 saw the highest number of boys referred (n4), which could be as a result of a focus on sexual exploitation in boys.

- In 2015/16 the average age was 14 years, ranging from 8 years to 17 years with 3 male victims identified
- In 2016/17 the average age was 14 years, ranging from 9 years to 17 years, with 2 male victims identified
- In 2017/18 the average age for victims remained 14 years, ranging from 12 years to 17 years, with 0 male victims identified.
- In 2018/19 the average age of victims was 14.4 years, ranging from 10 years to 17 years, with 4 male victims identified.

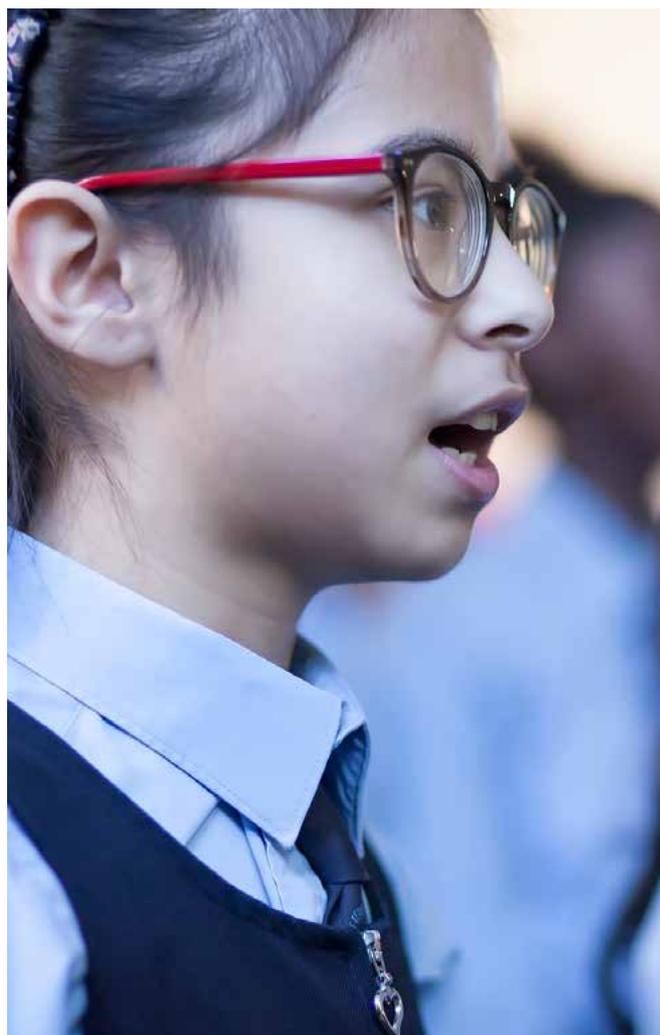
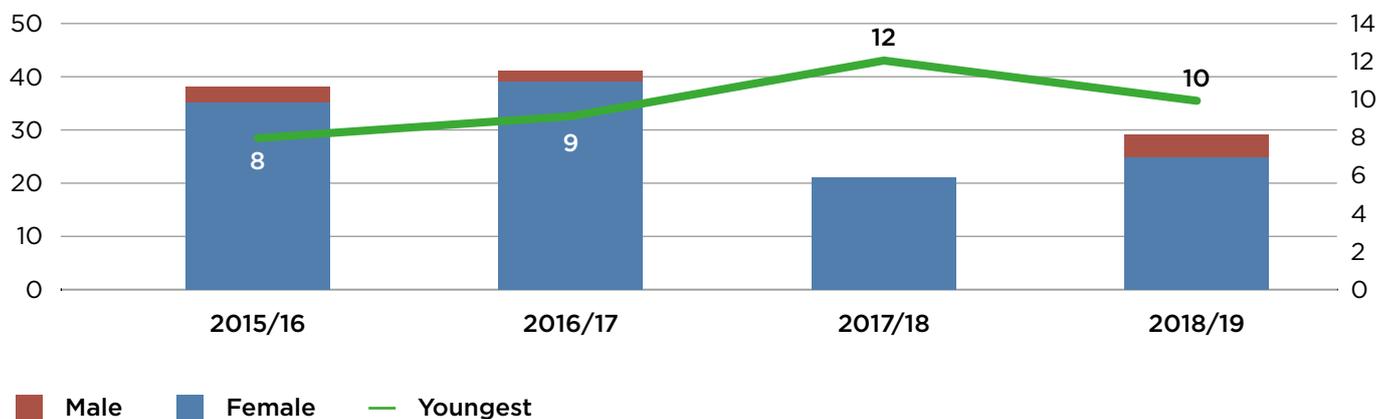
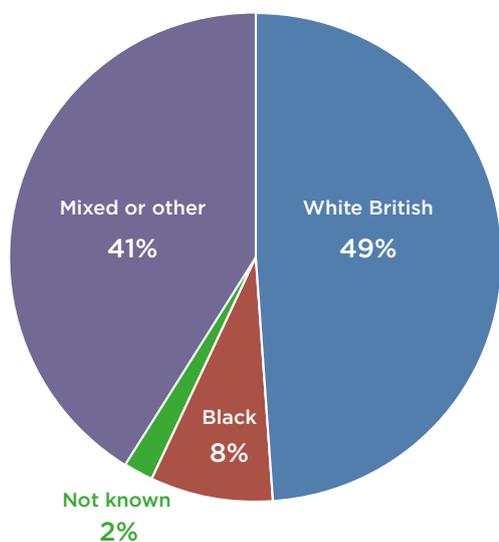


Table 10: CSE - Gender and Youngest Age of Referral



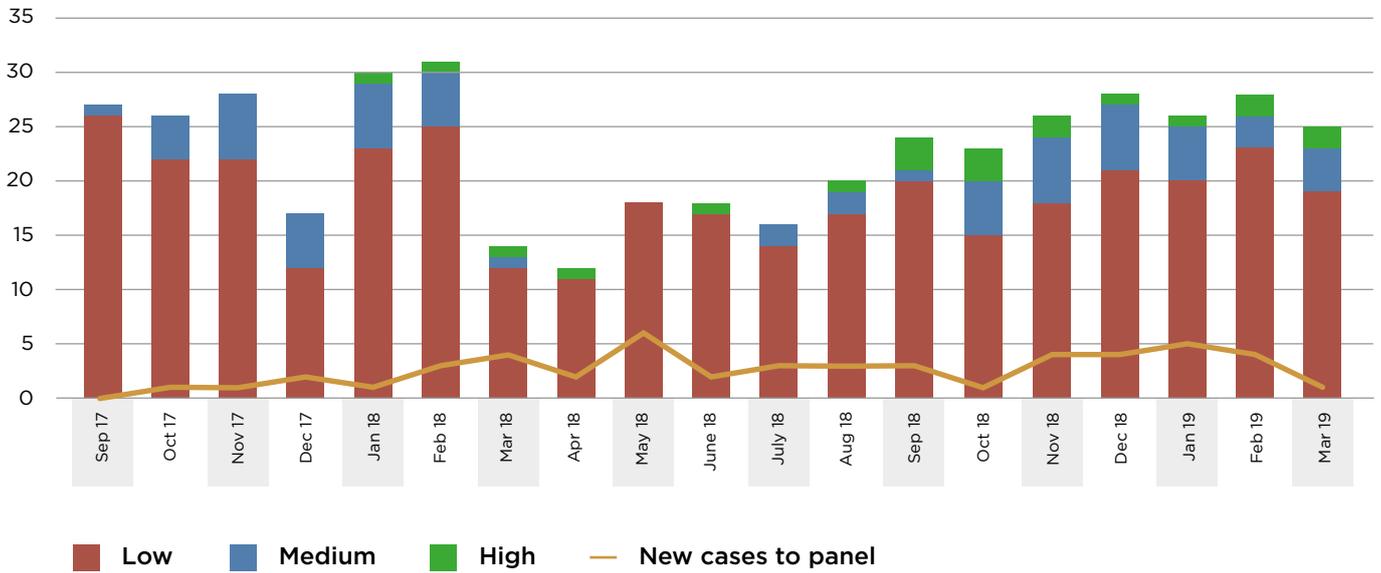
The majority ethnicity is White British (49%) with 48% of the cohort identified as BAME / other.

Table 11: CSE and Ethnicity



All Medium and High risk cases are discussed at the MARVE panel with a less frequent discussion for Low cases, usually on a dip sample basis. New cases are presented by the Exploitation manager and will return to panel for discussion if Medium or High risk. At the time of establishing the panel the number of cases were relatively few and with not many Medium to High cases. However, since its commencement in September, the proportion has risen and therefore panel meetings have been extended from a half-day to almost a full day.

Table 12: CSE Panel Cases



3.3.1 CSE and Looked After Children

As noted above, in early 2018, a review of Adolescent Panels was undertaken to consider opportunities for streamlining attendance and potential duplication across the partnership. As a result of this review, the MARVE Panel now oversees our work regarding child sexual and criminal exploitation, gangs, serious youth violence, sexually harmful behaviour and other overlapping forms of adolescent risk.

The most recent ‘Dashboard’ in regard to CSE outlines all those referred to MASE (now MARVE) during 2018 and of the 32 children referred, the following had Social Care involvement:

- 18.7% (6) were Looked After
- 18.7% (6) were on a Child Protection Plan
- 21.8% (7) were on a Child in Need Plan
- 0.31% (1) was a Care Leaver

In 2018-2019 6 looked after young people were identified as being at risk of CSE. Current open cases are tracked each month at the MARVE Panel meeting.

3.3.2 CSE and Out of Borough Looked After Children Cases

Whilst the desire is normally to keep young people in the local area, in some cases we have placed young people away from the borough because of our concerns about the individual. For some young people placements away from their home community is a key part of the care plan as a result of their vulnerability to exploitation in this borough or neighbouring boroughs. The needs of some the young people are such that they require specialist placements which are not available in Merton or surrounding boroughs. For all children being placed outside of the borough the Director of Children, Schools and Families is required to sign off agreement for the placement. Care plans for these children and young people are reviewed to ensure that where possible they are supported to return to their home community at the earliest opportunity. These cases are all held open to the CSE Operational Lead and monitored for a period of time while the placement settles and the CSE is deemed to no longer be a risk. If CSE is considered to remain a risk whilst the young person is in placement, the case will remain open and monitored with a plan in place to ensure appropriate support for the young person.

3.4 Children Missing from Home and School

In 2018-2019 there were 357 episodes of children going missing from home or care.

Catch22 provides the local Return Home Interviews for missing young people. They attend the weekly missing and monthly meetings to ensure any crossover is picked up at the earliest opportunity. The Young Women and Girls worker attends the weekly missing meeting and is a navigator in the MASH to ensure a coordinated approach. The Police present a summary of missing CSE cases at the MARVE Panel to ensure that there are no gaps.

Actions to Address Children Missing from Home and Care

- Ongoing strengthening of 'multi-agency Missing from Care and Home Panel' supported by a 'Missing dataset' which identifies other vulnerabilities including CSE and CME.
- 'Weekly Missing Meeting' established in April 2016 and embedded in response to a need to strengthen multi-agency operational working to ensure that children receive timely support from appropriate services including a return home interview.
- Policies and procedures in place to deliver a well-coordinated response to children reported as missing from home or care. This was refreshed and approved by the Board in September 2018
- Ongoing use of Police Missing Person Co-ordinators' analysis of repeat locations and individuals for missing persons meetings.
- Independent organisation (Catch22) commissioned to work as part of a wider interagency team to provide practical and emotional support and to prevent and reduce episodes of going missing. Catch22 also provide 'return home interviews'.
- With regards to children/young people known to Children's Social Care, case management of CIN/CP children and young people going missing from home/care is improving and recording and case management of Looked after Children missing or absent has improved over the last 12 to 18 months.
- All in-house foster carers have received 'missing and absent' procedure training.
- 'Children Missing' policies and procedures are checked as part of the placement commissioning process.
- Agency foster carers and residential placements are required to report missing episodes in a timely way to the Council and Police and are required to support the Council to implement safety plans.

Action Taken to Address Children Missing from School

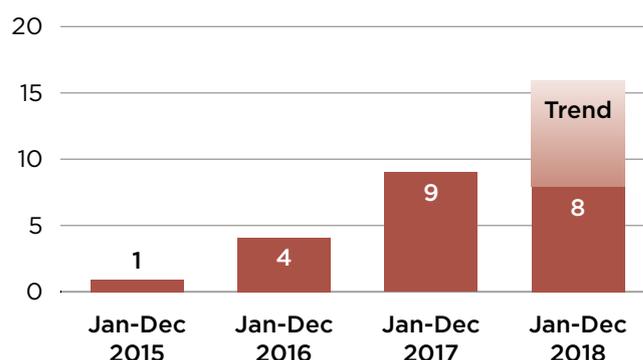
- A strong partnership approach of the multi-disciplinary Hard to Place and CME Panels
- Maintained our strong performance with low levels of NEET and achieved significant reduction of numbers of young people in the “Not Known” category.
- CME/PA protocols between Education and Social Care services strengthened with regular reporting to CSF Continuous Improvement Board.
- Briefings provided to Primary and Secondary School head teachers on safeguarding risks associated with absence from school and reinforced as appropriate in termly designated teachers’ events.
- Specific guidance provided to schools on forced marriage, female genital mutilation, child trafficking and Prevent.
- Continued to improve school attendance and maintained our strong focus on preventing permanent exclusions
- Adopted a vigilant approach to the quality of alternative education provision in the borough and the identification and notification of unregistered schools.
- Strengthened Education Welfare Service focus on the home education process where families opt to educate children other than at school (EOTAS).
- Action is taken by the authority in relation to unregistered schools, we are actively monitoring and liaising with Ofsted where necessary
- Ongoing commitment to Schools Police Officers with a proactive prevention programme and key link role.
- Rolled out changes in relation to Pupil Registration Regulations 2016 regarding on and off rolling
- Further developed the CME panel dataset and intelligence analysis

- Consolidated school partnerships and further developed the Merton Education Partnership,
- Used forums to highlight Safeguarding.
- Developed schools and early years Safeguarding audit tool and guidance (In early years all funded support and targeted support settings).

3.5 Child Criminal Exploitation

The MARVE Protocol provided the following data in regard to Criminal Exploitation numbers on a calendar basis:

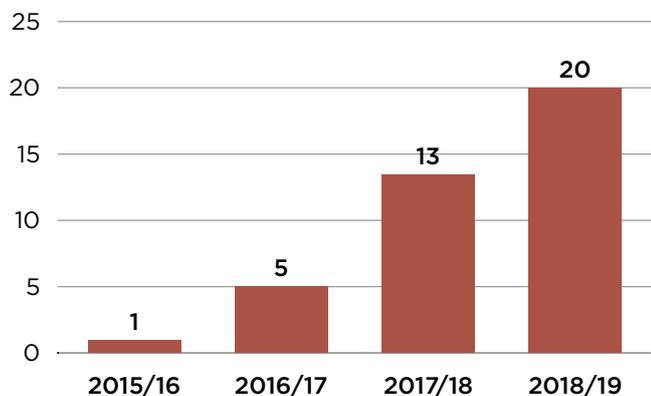
Table 13: CCE Cases Annually



The data above is in regard to confirmed county lines cases. The trend prediction was accurate with a further 9 cases referred since May 2018. This is also in line with the new protocol and a broader spectrum of criminal exploitation being experienced. The rise is possibly due to an increased awareness of criminal exploitation, in particular county lines; in addition, one of the MOPAC workers’ job description has been developed to include work with young people exploited into criminal behaviour.

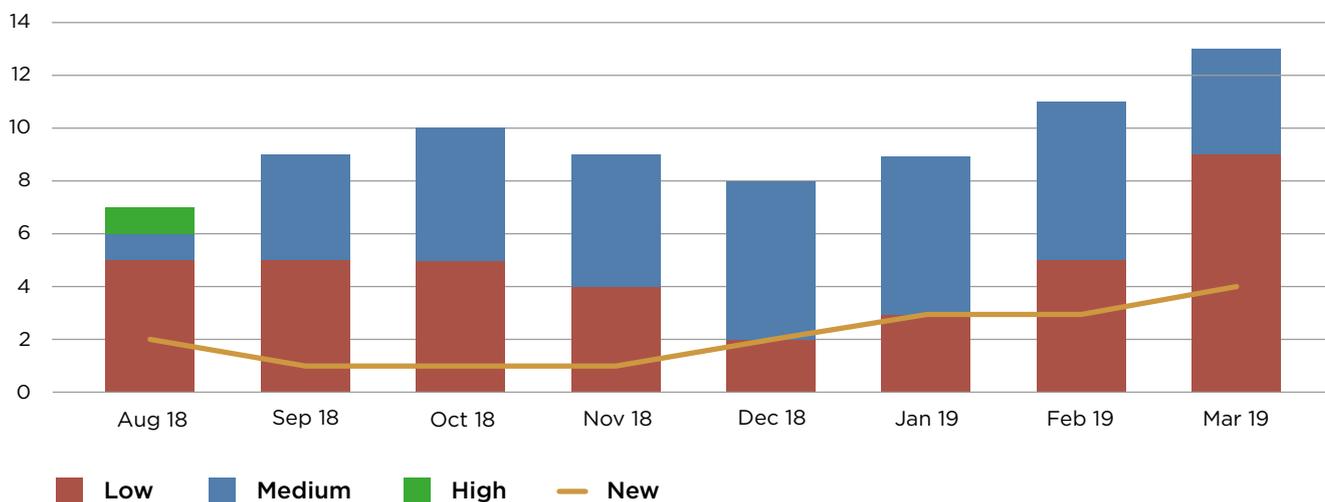
In order to align CSE and CCE data this will now be tracked on a financial year basis.

Table 14: CCE Referrals



The CCE cases have also been tracked in regard to the number of Low, Medium or High each month. There has only been one High case, discussed in the first MARVE panel. The increase in referrals is seen since Dec 2018 and the proportion is beginning to mirror that of CSE cases.

Table 15: CCE Panel Cases



3.6 Prevent

The Board's Promote and Protect Young People Strategic Sub-Group works with Safer Merton to ensure that there is a strong grip and clear oversight of all Prevent cases involving young people. The MSCB has worked hard, along with Safer and Stronger, to achieve strong engagement with the 'Prevent' agenda involving key partners including police, schools, early years settings and with faith, voluntary sector and wider community groups. Merton has not been identified as a Prevent Borough.

There is comprehensive Prevent Guidance available to staff via the MSCB and a programme of training for staff and external stakeholders in the borough.

CSF supports schools to deliver the Prevent Duty which is evident by:

- The provision of Governor training;
- Annual training for all staff at every school;
- The use of Head Teachers meetings to discuss Prevent matters;
- Schools undertake IT monitoring and the London Grid for Learning is in place in all schools;
- Schools are teaching British values and there are a range of curriculum projects to support this; and
- The borough operates a strong Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE) with involvement from Prevent and Counter Terrorism Police.

Prevent referrals are all managed through the MASH. This ensures safeguarding measures to be put in place from the start of a referral. The Channel Panel has representation from the MASH and enables appropriate case discussion to implement appropriate safeguarding measures.



An area for development is to ensure that Prevent concerns about cases discussed at other panels, such as MAPPA or Offender Management, are shared with the Channel chair (either informally or via a referral). In 2018-2019 there were no referrals relating to Prevent; of these referrals none were Merton children.



3.7 Female Genital Mutilation

The Board has refreshed its multi-agency guidance on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The Board provides multi-agency training on FGM, which is well attended. The Board also provides 'red alert' briefings to Merton schools around Easter and Summer holidays, which have been identified as key risk periods for FGM due to the length of the holiday period.

4.0 Statutory and Legislative Context

Merton Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) is the Local Safeguarding Children Board for Merton. Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) have a range of roles and statutory functions.

Section 13 of the Children Act 2004 requires each local authority to establish a Local Safeguarding Children Board for their area and specifies the organisations and individuals (other than the local authority) that the Secretary of State may prescribe in regulations that should be represented on LSCBs.

The Children Act 2004 Section 14 sets out the objectives of LSCBs, which are:

- (a) to coordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area; and
- (b) to ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.

The LSCB is not an operational body and has no direct responsibility for the provision of services to children, families or adults. Its responsibilities are strategic planning, co-ordination, advisory, policy, guidance, setting of standards and monitoring. It can commission multi-agency training but is not required to do so.

The delivery of services to children, families and adults is the responsibility of the commissioning and provider agencies, the **Partners**, not the LSCB itself.

Regulation 5 of the **Local Safeguarding Children Boards Regulations 2006** sets out LSCB duties as:

- 4.1 (a)** developing policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area of the authority, including policies and procedures in relation to:
 - (i) the action to be taken where there are concerns about a child's safety or welfare, including thresholds for intervention;
 - (ii) training of persons who work with children or in services affecting the safety and welfare of children;
 - (iii) recruitment and supervision of persons who work with children;
 - (iv) investigation of allegations concerning persons who work with children;
 - (v) safety and welfare of children who are privately fostered;
- 4.1 (b)** communicating to persons and bodies in the area of the authority the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, raising their awareness of how this can best be done and encouraging them to do so;
- 4.1 (c)** monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of what is done by the authority and their Board partners individually and collectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and advising them on ways to improve
- 4.1 (d)** participating in the planning of services for children

Regulation 5 (2) relates to the LSCB Serious Case Reviews function and regulation 6 relates to the LSCB Child Death functions.

Regulation 5 (3) offers that an LSCB may also engage in any other activity that facilitates, or is conducive to, the achievement of its objectives.



These duties are further clarified in the statutory guidance: *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, 2018, Chapters 3, 4 and 5* (Working Together 2018)

The responsibilities and duties of safeguarding partners are specified in Working Together 2018, Chapters 3, 4 and 5. Partners have a responsibility to have oversight of single agency and multi-agency safeguarding and promotion of children's welfare (under Children Act 2004, section 11,) as set out in Working Together chapters 1 and 2.

The Children and Social Care Act 2017 received Royal Assent on 27th April 2017. The Act abolishes LSCBs in summer 2019, replacing them with Safeguarding Partnerships. The *Children and Social Work Act 2017* amends the Children Act 2004 and creates Safeguarding Partners

According to the 2017 Act, a *safeguarding partner* in relation to a local authority area in England is defined under the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the *Children and Social Work Act 2017*) as:

- (a) the local authority
- (b) a clinical commissioning group for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area
- (c) the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area

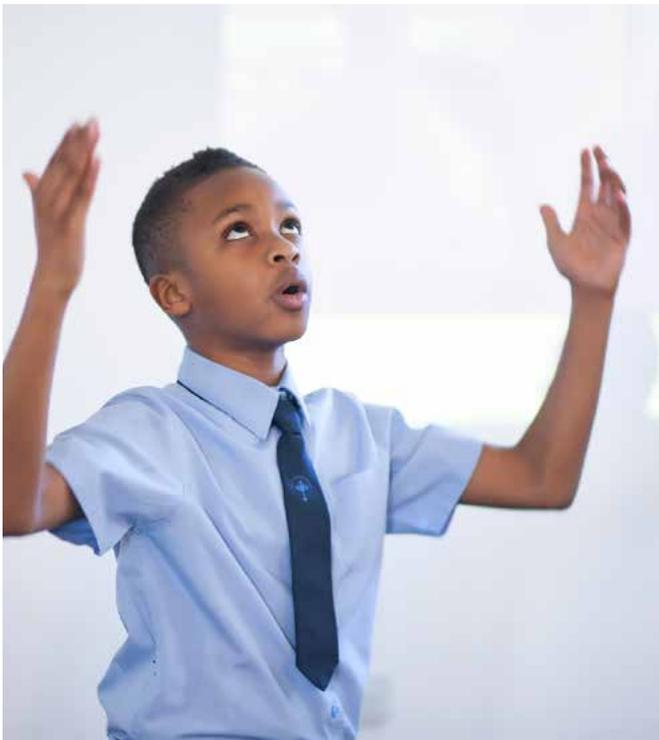
A revised Working Together to Safeguard Children and statutory regulations was published in July 2018.

5.0

MSCB Inter-relationships and Influence with other Key Partners

This year the Board operated a 12-month Business Plan, to be refreshed each March for the business year starting each April. The update of the MSCB Business Plan for 2018-2019, agreed by the Board in June 2018, is attached as Appendix 1. The Business Plan outlines the Board's priorities for 2018-2019 and was agreed by the Board at its annual Away Day in March 2018. Priority items can be added within the year.

The MSCB meets three times per year in half-day business meetings; and in a Business Planning Away Day once per year, in March. The Business Implementation Group of the Board meets four times per year. The progress of the actions agreed in the Business Plan is reviewed at each meeting. Each Sub Group has an agreed Work Plan and each Sub Group reports to the MSCB at each Board meeting.



Membership of the Board included the following statutory partners

- The London Borough of Merton
- the Metropolitan Police Service, Borough Commander;
- the National Probation Service and London Community Rehabilitation Companies;
- the Youth Offending Team;
- NHS England and Merton Clinical Commissioning Groups including representation from commissioned Health Services;
- CAFCASS³;

Membership of the Board also included

- Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion
- Assistant Director of Education
- The Director of Public Health, Merton
- Representation from the Voluntary and Community Sector
- Adult Social Care
- Representatives from Housing, including Housing Associations

There is also strong partnership and influence between the MSCB and the following strategic partnerships and their Sub-Groups

- The Health and Well-Being Board
- the Corporate Parenting Board
- the Children's Trust
- the Safer and Stronger Partnership
- The Youth Crime Executive Board

³ The structure and membership of the Board is included in this report as Appendices 2 and 3

6.0 MSCB Sub-Groups

The work of the MSCB is delivered and overseen through each of its Sub-Groups.

6.1 Quality Assurance Sub-Group

The purpose of the Quality Assurance (QA) Sub-Group is to ensure children and young people are safeguarded and protected by overseeing the quality of single and multi-agency work carried out in partnership across the children and young people sector.

The QA Sub-Group undertook the following activities in 2018-2019

- Oversaw the Child D Local Child Safeguarding Review (to be published in autumn 2019)
- Undertook two multi-agency audits: one on the theme of physical abuse and the other on the theme of working with fathers
- Reviewed the Merton Safeguarding Children quality assurance and performance framework.

6.2 Promote and Protect Young People Sub-Group

The Promote and Protect Young People (PPYP) Sub-Group met 7 times in 2018-2019. The purpose of the PPYP is to take overall lead responsibility on behalf of the MSCB to ensure that there are effective and up-to-date multi-agency policies, protocols and procedures to ensure children and young people are safeguarded and protected and their welfare is promoted; *concentrating on extra-familial* abuse where there is *risk of abuse outside the family*. PPYP is responsible for policies relating to issues like CSE, child criminal exploitation, children missing from home, care or education, child on child abuse, other forms of exploitation (such as radicalization), e-safety, trafficking, abuse by those in a position of trust or in institutions – including faith organisations and community organisations; and policies and procedures in relation to allegations against those in a position of trust (Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) referrals).

Actions of the Sub-Group in 2018-2019 included:

- Oversight of Child Sexual Exploitation
- Oversight of Child Criminal Exploitation
- Oversight of work to address gangs and serious youth violence
- Oversight of the MOPAC⁴ Knife Crime Action Plan
- Oversight of children going missing from home, school and care
- Oversight of commissioned services addressing adolescent vulnerability
- Approval of the MARVE Protocol and oversight of the work of the MARVE panel

6.3 Learning and Development Sub Group

The Learning and Development Sub-group takes overall lead on behalf of the MSCB to ensure that there are effective arrangements to inform and keep up-to-date the multi-agency and multi-disciplinary workforce knowledge and skills for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. The Learning and Development Sub-Group met four times in 2018-2019.

6.3.1 MSCB Annual Conference

Part of the responsibility of the Learning and Development Sub-Group is to oversee the delivery of the MSCB Annual Conference. This year the Conference was held on the 19th March 2019. The title of the Conference was *Fight, Flight or Fright* with a focus on stakeholders' involvement in crime prevention, including contextual safeguarding and trauma informed practice. We were particularly pleased to have as our keynote speaker, Dr Carlene Firmin, MBE, who is the Principal Research Fellow, The International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking at the University of Bedfordshire. Dr Firmin challenged us to think about context – spaces and places, highlighting the need for the Board and partners to develop systems and processes to safeguard older children as they move away from their family homes into their neighbourhoods, schools,

⁴ Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime

on public transport, in local parks and at local shopping centres.

133 professionals/practitioners attended the conference from a range of agencies including:

- Education (primary, secondary and special schools)
- the Police
- Adult Social Care
- Children's Social Care
- Early Years
- Health including Merton CCG, Central London Community Health Care, Epsom and St Helier Hospital Trust, South West London and St Georges Mental Health Trust and Public Health
- Housing including Merton Housing Needs and Registered Social Landlords
- Youth Inclusion including Youth Justice Teams
- Safer Merton
- A range of voluntary organisations including MVSC, Merton Carers, the Inner Strength Network



6.3.2 MSCB Training

The MSCB offers an extensive training programme that is aligned to the Board's priorities. The training programme also provides briefings on learning emerging out of learning reviews and SCRs, audit activity and significant developments in safeguarding.

The conference was well received with an overall rating of excellent.

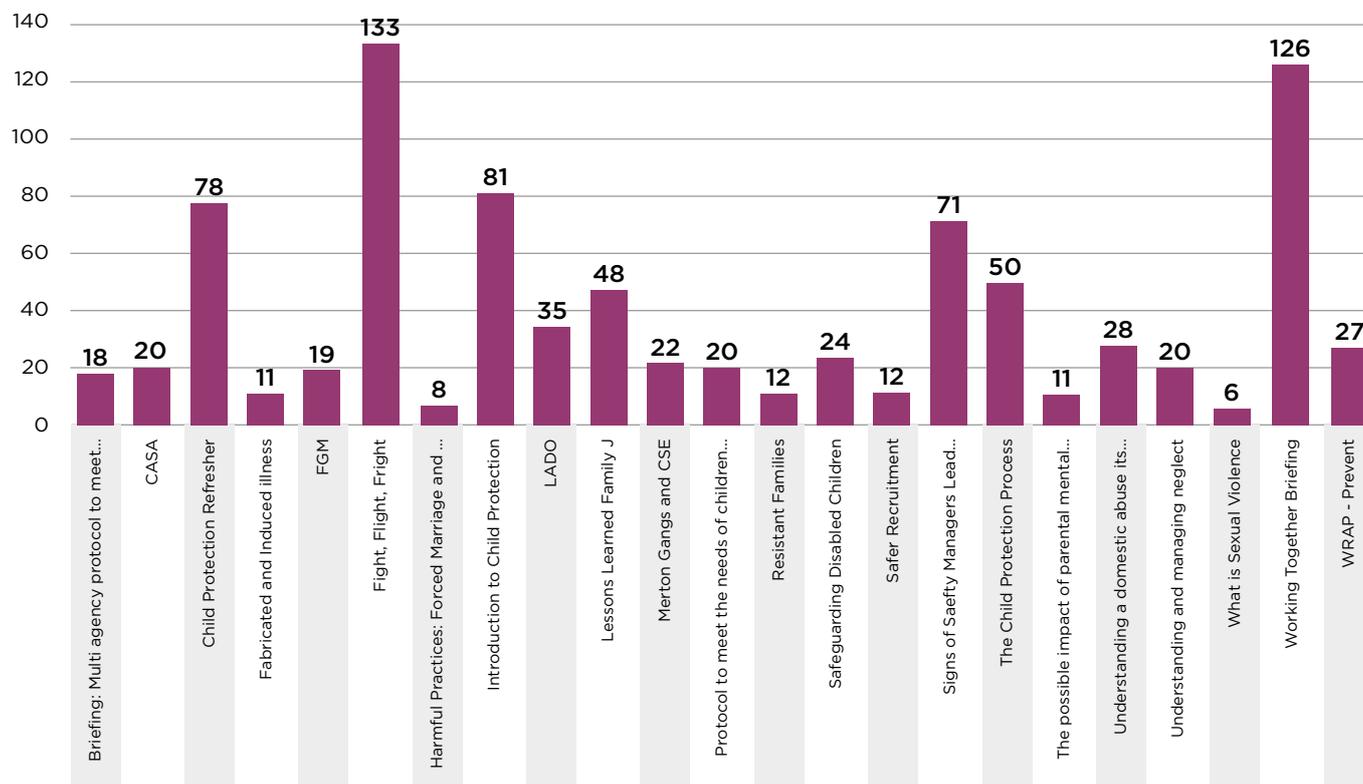
The table below show details of MSCB training activity in 2018-2019

Table 16: MSCB training activity in April 2018- February 2019

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Planned events	3	8	5	5		4	3	6	2	1	2
Added events	1	3	5	2		5	4	5	0	3	5
Cancelled events	2	4	2	3		2	4	4	0	2	4
Actual events	2	7	8	4		7	3	7	2	2	3
Booked	29	102	150	70		157	136	97	38	19	54
Cancellations	0	8	17	9		13	15	16	6	0	4
DNAs	4	17	38	13		30	24	21	6	1	9
Extras	0	21	32	4		18	14	5	0	4	3
Number attended	25	98	127	52	0	132	111	65	26	22	44

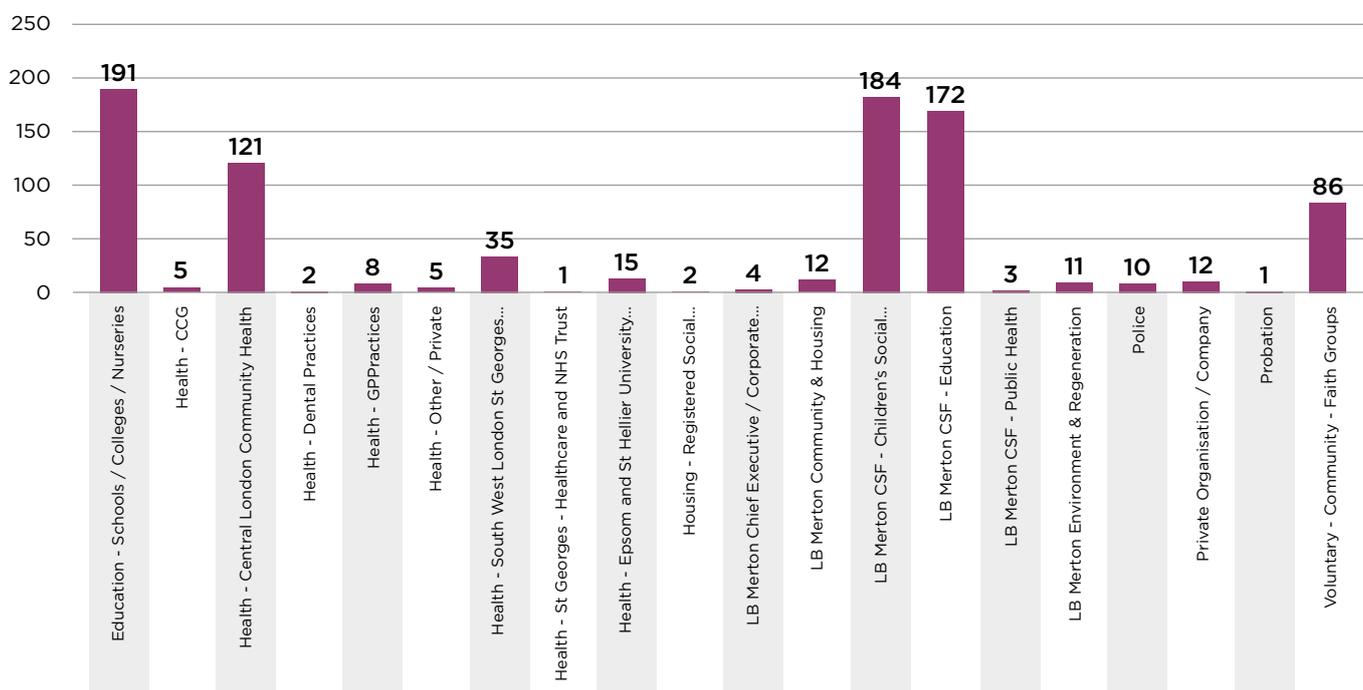
The table below indicates attendance per course.

Table 17: MSCB Training Attendance per Agency



The table below indicates attendance per agency.

Table 18: Attendance per Agency



6.4. Policy Sub-Group

The purpose of the Policy Sub-Group is to take overall responsibility on behalf of the MSCB to ensure that there are effective and up-to-date multi-agency policies, protocols and procedures⁵ to ensure children and young people are safeguarded and protected and their welfare is promoted. In the business year 1 April 2018-31 March 2019 the Policy Sub-Group met 4 times.

The Policy Sub-Group drafted or refreshed the following policies/strategies/protocols for approval by the Board:

- Mental Health Protocol
- Parental Substance Misuse Protocol
- Guidance to Practitioners regarding Domestic Violence and Abuse
- The Bruising in Pre-mobile Babies Protocol
- The Young Carers Strategy

6.5 Merton Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) is an inter-agency forum which meets regularly to review the deaths of all children usually resident in Merton. It is a statutory body and is accountable to the Merton Safeguarding Children Board.

The purpose of CDOP is to collect and analyse information about all children who die in England, from birth to the day before their eighteenth birthday. This is with a view to providing a complete and thorough picture of the cause of death, identifying any matters of concern affecting the safety and welfare of children in the area, and any wider public health or safety concerns arising from a death or pattern of deaths.

The number of child deaths in Merton is relatively small. However, it is helpful to understand wider data on infant and child deaths, which should inform local strategic planning:

- Neonatal mortality rate measures deaths under 28 days, per 1,000 live births.
- Infant Mortality rate measures deaths in infants aged less than 1 year per 1,000 live births.
- Child Mortality rate measures deaths in children aged 1-17 years per 100,000 children.
- Data is measured over a three-year period because of the small numbers involved. Latest published data available from the Office for National Statistics is for 2017, which was released on 17th June 2019.

In 2018-19 two meetings of CDOP were held, and the panel reviewed the following cases:

Table 19: CDOP meetings and No. of Cases Reviewed 2018-19

	9th July 2018	11th March 2019
Number of cases	5	7

The organisation of the CDOP is the responsibility of the Single point of Contact for Child Deaths/ Safeguarding Manager. Merton CDOP is fully operational and has all case reviews up to date. In previous years the panel has had four to five meetings per year. As a result of fewer child deaths, two meetings scheduled for October 2018 and January 2019 were postponed as there were too few cases for review. The Merton CDOP Panel will continue to function in compliance with pan-London and national guidance, and report to Merton LSCB on a quarterly basis through the MSCB reporting process, and the CDOP Annual Report

For the period 2010-19 a total of 132 child deaths were reported to Merton CDOP. In 2018-2019 there were 10 child deaths reported to the Merton CDOP.

⁵ See appendix for reference to Policies, Protocols and Procedures

Table 20: Child Deaths reported to Merton CDOP, 2010-11 to 2018-19

Year	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Total
Cases	21	20	18	12	15	12	16	8	10	132

There were 12 cases reviewed by CDOP for Merton in 2018-19. Of these, 5 cases were related to a child death in 2017-18. Seven cases were related to child deaths in 2018-19. There are no child death reviews outstanding for previous years.

Table 21: Merton CDOP cases reviewed 2018-19 and open cases remaining at 31st March 2019

	Total number of cases reviewed 2018 - 2019 (year of death)	Number of open cases to be reviewed 2018 - 2019 (year of death)
Case by Year	5 (2017-18) 7 (2018-19)	1 (2017-18) 3 (2018-19)
Total	12	4

6.6 Youth Crime Executive Board (YCEB)

The Youth Crime and Prevention Executive Board (YCPEB) is chaired by the Director of Children's, Schools and Families. Membership includes senior representatives from Police, Children's Social Care (CSC), Education Inclusion, Probation, Housing, Public Health and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The YCPEB is the governance structure for Merton in relation to the work of the Youth Justice Team (the local Youth Offending Team), including production of the Annual Youth Justice Plan, performance management and quality assurance. It also oversees the partnership response to serious youth violence, gangs and the "Troubled Families" programme (known locally as Transforming Families) (TF). The YCPEB reports to the MSCB and the Safer and Stronger Partnership, which has wider oversight of crime issues in the borough.

The YCPEB's key priorities over the past year have involved maintaining and monitoring the team's performance against the Youth Justice Board's three key performance indicators of reducing first time entrants to the Youth Justice system, sustaining low numbers of young people who are sentenced to custody and reducing the number and rate of young people who reoffend. The YCPEB priorities have also been in regard to delivering the TF programme and reducing the serious youth violence and gang activity in the borough. Therefore the YCPEB contributes to all three of the MSCB priorities in regard to Think Family, Early Help and Vulnerable Adolescents.

Following a restructure in April 2018, the Youth Justice Team, Transforming Families Teams and newly established Tackling Exploitation Team (managed by the CSE Lead) have been placed into a new service, which the staff renamed as the Adolescent and Family Service. The YJT Manager's post has been deleted and assimilated into the Head of Service post, which sits within the Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion senior leadership team. The YJT is a multi-agency service with seconded staff from Police, Probation, Education, CAMHS, Catch22, Nursing and Social Care. The YJT undertakes assessments and delivers interventions with young people receiving a formal disposal from either the Police (pre-court outcomes) or the courts (statutory orders) and also has a bespoke specialist offer for parents. The Transforming Families team delivers targeted interventions with families aiming to intervene effectively before problems escalate within a family. This involves working closely with schools, academies, the Police and the Education Welfare Service. The team has a targeted parenting officer who provides group work. The MOPAC funded gangs' worker in TF delivers both group work and individual interventions with young people involved in gangs and/or serious youth violence.

The YCPEB oversees Merton's response to new legislation, the inspection regime, its local crime reduction and prevention initiatives, monitors issues concerning risk and safeguarding and ensure staffing and resourcing levels are in place to maintain performance and effectiveness within the delivery of the youth crime and prevention services.

The YCPEB monitors performance through quarterly 'dashboard' reports, summaries of the highest risk young people monitored at the Youth Offender Management and Gang Multi-Agency Panel, receiving notifications from partners and the Youth Justice Board in regard to national changes and developments and through audit reports.

The YCPEB is preparing for a new inspection framework from HMIP, which includes a casework audit but has been extended to include an assessment of the governance and leadership of youth justice and the pre-court work carried out by both Police and the YJT. The Board members have attended a 'visioning event' with the YJT staff to understand the work undertaken by all the team members, which was presented through a role-play and 'interesting facts' handout. This was followed by roundtable discussions to allow both board members and YJT staff to discuss examples of good practice and any barriers to achieving positive outcomes.

The focus for the YCPEB in the next year will be to improve performance in regard to re-offending and use of custody, consider avenues for sustainable services in light of the funding for TF ending in 2020 in parallel to reductions in YJB Grant and MOPAC funding, supporting the integrated management of exploitation and harm, ensuring high quality services and staffing are in place for the most high risk and vulnerable adolescents, be 'inspection-ready' and confidently sharing good practice.

6.7 Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Sub-Group

The MSCB is committed to addressing the violence against women and girls. The strategic aims outline four priority areas in tackling VAWG and domestic abuse, which are:

1. Providing accessible, evidence-based, holistic support to people who have experienced or are at risk of VAWG
2. Implementing effective systems and interventions for working with perpetrators.
3. Fostering an integrated and coordinated approach to tackling VAWG.
4. In order to deliver the four strategic aims this action plan is split into four priority themes;

1. Coordination: to develop a coordinated multi-agency approach by ensuring that the response to VAWG is shared by all stakeholders, embedded into service plans and coordinated effectively.

2. Prevention: to change attitudes and prevent violence by raising awareness through campaigns; safeguarding and educating children and young people; early identification, intervention and training.

3. Provision: to improve provision and specialist support services which are essential in enabling people to end violence in their lives and recover from the damaging effects of abuse by providing a range of services to meet the needs of victims and survivors; practical and emotional support, emergency and acute services; access to legal advice and support, refuge and safe accommodation.

4. Protection: to provide effective response to perpetrators outside of and within the criminal justice system through effective investigation; prosecution; victim support and protection; perpetrator interventions.

Key achievements and highlights for 2018-2019.

The Merton VAWG board oversaw a range of work during 2018-19:

- Work undertaken through the campaigns resulted in some increases in reports for quarters 1-3 however reporting in quarter 4 reduced. The reduction may coincide with there being no sustained promotion during these months. The seasonal peaks for DV reporting for August and December have changed slightly with August still being a peak month but December reports had lowered and as such we now ensure that services are ready for these profiled seasonal increases
- The partnership agreed to commence work on a sexual violence profile. This work is underway and the report is due to be completed September 2019.
- Delivered a full programme of activities for the 16 Days of Activism 2018. This included a learning day, a cake sale, an event at Merton College and a tweet a day via Twitter and Facebook.
- Continued providing training support to the MSCB
- Looked at the Pan London Housing Reciprocal protocol that has been rolled out across London to determine how Merton can be involved.
- Completed the commissioning of the IDVA and Refuge contract

Figures for this year:

- Merton's Police achieved a 21% successful detection rate (July 2018 - August 2019) for Violence with Injury,
- Overall DVA Sanction Detection rate was 17%.
- There has been a 19% increase in DVA reports up to the last financial year (April 2018 - March 2019).
- For the last financial year (2018-19) Sexual offences represented less than 3% of all reported crime in Merton. The overall level of sexual offences in Merton fell by 5% (20 offences) from the previous financial year.
- Sanctioned detections of sexual offences have fallen again in the last year. The overall rate for all sexual offences is 8% and for rape 5%. Investigative resources for this offence type moved from a centralised team to resources based on the 4 borough BCU as of February 2019.

As we move forward through 2019-2020 we will continue to build on this work by:

- Re- writing the VAWG strategy and business plan; the current plan will end March 2020.
- Completing the Sexual Violence Profile and considering how the outcomes of this will change operational delivery and strategic commissioning
- Conduct a light review and update of the DVA profile in advance of the 2019-20 full review
- Continue to build on our successes of the NO MORE and Ask Angela campaigns to further improve reporting rates within the borough
- Develop and deliver an improved programme of events during the 16 Days of Activism campaign 2018, deliver a robust programme of events for NO MORE week 2019 and ensure that the VAWG partnership acknowledge all international, national and/or local days around VAWG

6.8 Structure and Effectiveness of the MSCB

The MSCB has clear thresholds which are understood throughout the safeguarding system. This is known locally as the Merton Young Person, Child and Family Well-Being Model.

The Board works in cooperation with neighboring children's services including peer reviews; contributing to SCRs and learning (Croydon, Wandsworth, Kingston, Richmond and Sutton)

6.9 MSCB Budget

MSCB Budget for the financial year 2018-2019

Agency Contributions

CAFCASS	£550
London CRC	£1,000
London Probation Service	£1,000
London Borough of Merton	£142,030
Merton CCG	£55,000
Metropolitan Police	£5,000

Sub - total **£204,580**

Total **£204,580**

Expenditure

Staffing	£131,711
Premises	£2,000
Supplies and Services	£69,737
Transport	£1,132

Total **£204,580**



7.0 Sub-Group Task and Finish Group Summary Reports/Effectiveness

7.1 The Young Carers Strategy Task and Finish Group

The Young Carers Task and Finish Group comprised of colleagues in Children's Social Care, Health, the Mental Health Trust, Adult Social Care, Merton Carer Support and other voluntary organisations. The proposed Young Carers strategy sets out how the MSCB, Merton council, and its partners will bring about improvements in the way services work together to identify, assess and improve outcomes for young people with caring responsibilities. This strategy aims to build on the priorities of the Merton Safeguarding Children's Board, to 'Think Family' in its collective partnership approach to fostering positive outcomes for children and young people. It also forms our collective response to lessons drawn from Serious Case Reviews, including our own local example.

The priorities for change, identified within this strategy, have been developed through listening to the voice of our local young carers and are agreed by the range of agencies and professionals that work with children and families across the health, education, social care and voluntary sector. The strategy sets out what actions will be taken to achieve our priorities and identifies the resources needed to meet these. The Young Carers' Strategy was approved by the Board in January 2019.

7.2 The LSCB to Partnership Transition Task and Finish Group

As noted in section 2.1 of this report, the Partnership Transition task and finish Group was established by the Business Implementation Group, and commissioned to consult with members of the MSCB and key stakeholders in order to agree proposals for the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership Agreement.

Between April 2018 and January 2019, the task and finish group met five times.

The final draft of the Partnership Agreement was presented to the MSCB at its away day in March 2019; the Agreement was approved by the Board and submitted to the three Statutory Safeguarding Partners (the London Borough of Merton, Merton CCG and the Police) for final approval through each Partner's governance processes by June 2019. The proposed structure and membership of the new Partnership are included in this report as appendices 2 and 3.

7.3 Learning and Improvement Reviews (LiR) and Serious Case Reviews (SCR)

The Child D Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (a local learning and improvement review)

In November 2017, a Merton child, known as Child D, was murdered by her father. The MSCB commissioned a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review to look at how agencies worked with Child D and her family, to identify key learning and to make recommendations for improvements in multi-agency safeguarding practice. The Independent Author's review is due to be shared in winter 2019/2020.

8.0

Agency Effectiveness in Safeguarding – reports for each key agency drawing on Section 11 and QA and Challenge Meetings

8.1 Section 11

The Board holds partners to account through its Section 11 Quality Assurance and Peer Challenge Process. The Board also receives annual reports from the Children's Trust, the VAWG Group and Public Health.⁶

In February 2018, the Board's Business Implementation Group agreed that the Section 11 process for 2018-2019 would involve a review and update of each agency's Section 11 Self-Audit for 2018-2019. A Quality Assurance and Peer Challenge meeting would also be held with key agencies.

The Board agreed to use the Pan-London Section 11 Audit Tool, developed by the London Safeguarding Children Board. The audit tool allows each agency or organisation to assess the quality of its safeguarding practice against eight agreed safeguarding standards providing supporting evidence where appropriate. These standards are as follows:

STANDARD 1 – Senior management have commitment to the importance of safeguarding and promoting children's welfare

STANDARD 2 – There is a clear statement of the agency's responsibility towards children and this is available to all staff

STANDARD 3 – There is a clear line of accountability within the organisation for work on safeguarding and promoting welfare

STANDARD 4 – Service development takes into account the need to safeguard and promote welfare and is informed, where appropriate, by the views of children & families

STANDARD 5 – There is effective training on safeguarding & promoting the welfare of children for all staff working with or, depending on the agency's primary functions, in contact with children & families

STANDARD 6 – Safer recruitment procedures including vetting procedures and those for managing allegations are in place

STANDARD 7 – There is effective inter-agency working to safeguard & promote the welfare of children

STANDARD 8 – There is effective Information Sharing

Agency Returns

The MSCB has received completed returns from the following agencies:

1. Aspen Cancer Centre
2. Clarion Housing
3. LBM Adult Social Care
4. LBM Community and Housing (Housing Needs)
5. LBM Children Schools and Families (CSF provided a departmental return including Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion, Education and Early Years including commissioning)
6. LBM Public Health
7. LBM Safer Merton
8. LBM Youth Justice
9. London CRC (Probation, a Regional Return)
10. Metropolitan Police Borough and CAIT
11. National Probation
12. NHS Central London Community Health Care London
13. NHS Epsom and St Helier Hospital Trust

⁶ Evidence includes minutes of Board Meetings, the notes of the Section 11 Challenge Meetings, Section 11 Returns, QA Minutes, notes of multi-agency audits, the Board's Business Plan

14. NHS Merton Clinical Commissioning Group
15. NHS St George's Hospital Trust
16. NHS South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust
17. Parkside Private Hospital
18. British Transport Police (a Pan-London Return)

In addition to these returns the MSCB received section 11 Audit returns from 9 Independent Schools. These are listed as follows

1. Date Valley School Trust
2. Donhead School
3. Kings College School
4. The London Acorn School
5. The Norwegian School
6. The Study Preparatory School
7. The Rowan's School
8. Ursuline Preparatory School
9. Wimbledon College Preparatory School

In addition to the completed self-audit, the Board held a series of challenge meetings with key agencies to seek further assurance regarding their work to safeguard Merton's children and promote their welfare. Challenge meetings were held with the agencies grouped as follows:

- LBM Children Schools and Families (held on 22nd November 2018)
- NHS Epsom and St Helier and St George's Hospital Trusts (held on 5th December 2018)
- NHS Merton CCG and LBM Public Health (Held on 14th December 2018)
- NHS South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust, including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (held on 15th January 2019)
- Police and Public Protection including LBM Safer Merton, and Probation Services (held on 23rd November 2018)
- A challenge meeting was also held with Central London Community Health Care

As a result of the analysis of the section 11 returns coupled with the challenge process, the Board is assured that there is compliance with the standards outlined in Working Together 2018. Overall, the Section 11 returns and challenge meetings provide the Board with good assurance regarding the quality of safeguarding practice across the MSCB multi-agency partnership.

National or regional services (such as, CAFCASS and Probation) who submitted more 'global' self-assessments were asked to ensure that there was an addendum which gives assurance for Merton.

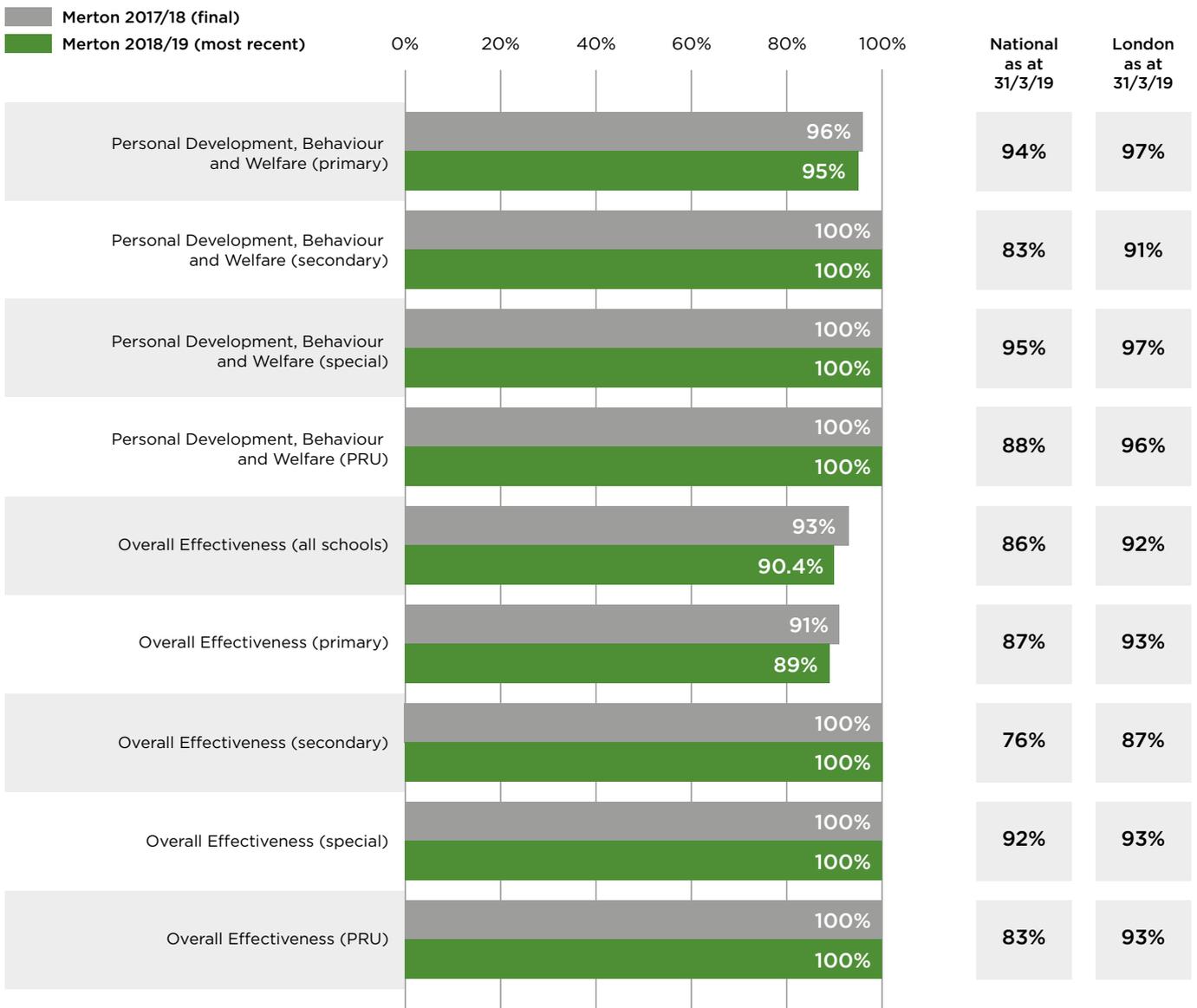
8.2 Schools

The MSCB has a strong relationship with Merton Schools. Schools and education providers are represented on the Board. We currently have:

- An FE College Representative
- A Secondary School Representative
- A Primary School Representative
- A Special School Representative

8.2.1 Schools' Ofsted Inspection Outcomes

Ofsted outcomes rated good or better



8.3 Children, Schools and Families (CSF) Department

Merton CSF department are a committed partner to the Board. There is robust and conspicuous political and professional leadership of children's services. Merton's Chief Executive, with the Director of Children Schools and Families, the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion and the Assistant Director for Education has overall responsibility for safeguarding. All senior managers within CSF take Safeguarding Responsibilities seriously and reinforce issues through their links to schools, early years and other settings.

Merton's latest Children and Young People's plan (2016-19) specifically prioritises the needs of more vulnerable children and young people in the borough through the provision of both specialist services and more sharply targeted early intervention/help. The plan acknowledges the wider context of austerity and demands on children's services including the impact of the Children and Families Act 2014, and as in previous years safeguarding children and young people is identified as one of 6 key priorities. The absolute priority of safeguarding children and young people is reflected in all corporate plans. CSE, Missing children and vulnerable adolescents are particular priorities in Merton's planning. CSF completed their Section 11 return.

8.4 CCG and Acute Trusts

Merton does not have an acute trust located in the Borough however there is an effective relationship with acute trusts in the neighbouring boroughs of Sutton, Wandsworth, Croydon, Lambeth and Kingston.



8.4.1 NHS Merton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

The Merton CCG has completed a Section 11 Self-audit and has attended Quality Assurance and Challenge meetings which gave the Board assurance that the CCG is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004. As a commissioner of health services, Merton CCG also formed part of the MSCB's QA Challenge Panel.

8.4.2 Epsom and St Helier NHS Trust

The Trust and the service provider completed a Section 11 Self-audit and attended Quality Assurance Challenge meetings, which gave the Board assurance that the Trust is fulfilling its statutory duties under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

8.4.3 SW London & St George's Mental Health Trust

South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust completed their Section 11 Self-audit; this was undertaken at a time of considerable organisational change due to a major transformation programme. The Trust's section 11 return and participation in the challenge process provided the Board with assurance that the Trust is fulfilling its statutory duties under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

8.4.4 St George's Hospital NHS Trust

The Trust completed a safeguarding survey as part of their Section 11 submission to the Board. The Trust also provided a range of supplementary evidence which gave the Board assurance that the Trust was fulfilling its statutory responsibilities in relation to Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

8.4.5 Central London Community Healthcare (CLCH) NHS Trust

CLCH trust completed their Section 11 submission to the Board for 2018. The Trust also provided supplementary evidence, including good practice examples and patient stories, which gave the Board assurance that the Trust was fulfilling its statutory responsibilities in relation to Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.



8.4.6 Public Health

The Director of Public Health sits on the Board and is a strong partner. The Director of Children, Schools and Families is also a member of the Health and Well-being Board. The JSNA also informs the priorities of the Board's Bi-Annual Business Plan. Public Health completed a Section 11 Self-audit that gave the Board assurance that the Public Health is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities in relation to Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

8.5 Community and Housing Dept. - London Borough of Merton

Community and Housing Department completed Section 11 Audits for Public Health, Adult Social Care and Housing and participated in the Quality Assurance Challenge Meetings. Representatives of the Housing Needs team and the Safeguarding Manager of Clarion Housing, Merton's largest Registered Social Housing provider, attends meetings of the Board and, where appropriate, its Sub-Groups.

8.6 Metropolitan Police/Probation/CAFCASS

Regional Section 11 returns have been completed by the South West London Basic Command Unit. The Police have included local information and analysis. The Police continue to be strong partners in the work of the Board and its Sub-Groups. The Board received regional Section 11 Returns from London CRC Probation and the National Probation Service; we have also received a regional return from CAFCASS. The Police, probation and public protection services participated in the section 11 QA and challenge process.



9.0

Views of Children and Young People and the Community

9.1 Merton's Children's Trust User Voice Strategy

The department's 'user voice' framework has been in place since 2014 and states our commitment to ensuring that children, young people and families have a key role in influencing the design and delivery of children's services. The framework is underpinned by an annual action plan, which sets out the significant amount of engagement with children, young people and their families that is conducted across the department.

Commitment One - Delivering on our Participation Promise: providing opportunities for all children and young people to influence Merton the place.

Notable activities and impact this year included: Youth forums (including pupil voice) and youth driven activities. Merton Youth Parliament (MYP) implemented a manifesto based on the top concerns of local young people - delivered a gangs 'think tank' event on crime prevention and gang awareness, a young lifesavers training event, and a 'Student Day of Action' enabling local pupils of all ages to discuss improvements to health and well-being, local environment, and crime prevention. MYP members said their involvement in the forum enabled them to develop teamwork, leadership and communication skills, confidence and self-esteem.

Pupil voice - review processes in schools are informed by pupil voice and have led to a range of developments in individual schools including, the implementation of a whole school survey, and a review of the costs of after school clubs. Feedback from LGBT+ pupils informed the development of a Trans Inclusion toolkit for schools in Merton and Wandsworth. My Futures ETE team facilitated youth led summer activities - one young person said "I really appreciate how understanding you are, it makes a change from all the other adults who just get angry with me all the time about stuff like this, thank you."

Consultations to inform the development of priorities and actions in key strategies. Young Carers Multi-Agency Strategy; the Autism Strategy; and the Great Weight Debate 31

recommendations. Activities which support the community. Merton Volunteer Police Cadets (VPC) are a uniformed youth group which supports the community in a broad range of events and activities "This is one of the best days in Cadets, everyone pulling together to help each other, and it's been great to cheer on the runners, they're amazing!" (Young cadet who supported the London Marathon).

Commitment Two - Child focused: enabling children and young people who are service users to influence improvements to our systems, services and processes.

Notable activities and impact this year included: Consultations to inform the development of priorities and actions in key strategies. Merton Looked After Children (LAC) strategy consultation report states that the majority (94%) of children and young people said they felt safe in their homes 'all or most of the time', compared to 75% in the general population. Children's views on all areas of their lives - home, school, activities, health and well-being, and relationships with carers and friends - have been used to develop the new LAC Strategy. User forums for vulnerable children in receipt of services. Children in Care Council informed discussions on a range of issues - housing, homelessness, budgeting, Staying Put in foster care, growing up undocumented, health, emotional well-being, LAC reviews, and Independent Reviewing Officer service.

Transforming Families youth forum said they would like more access to positive activities and the team organised a go-karting trip. Young people placed Transforming Families as 8/9 on a scale of 1-10.

The Youth Justice Youth Board (forum for young people) requested a range of developments - organising home visit, timings of youth board meetings, and access to the youth justice service building, these have been implemented by the Youth Justice Team. Recruitment and training. Care Leavers delivered workshops for prospective foster carers during the assessment process.



Learning from serious case reviews. Part of our response to the expressed views of Child B was the development and implementation of a new Young Carers Multi-Agency Strategy and protocol.

Commissioned and partner services ensuring effective youth participation. Commissioned services facilitated, user-led activities - service evaluation, planning and improvement; decision making about finances and strategy; recruitment; publicity; and the development of web based information and advice. One young person supported by the Catch22 risk and resilience commissioned service said, *"[C22 workers] listened to me and believed I could change...being positive and helpful and never judging me...I now have a course I enjoy at college."* Uptown Youth Service set up a new 'Saturday Step Up' inclusive session supported by peer mentors, in response to requests from its young people.

Commitment Three - Delivering on Merton's approach to casework practice: Putting the wishes and feelings of children and young people who are subject of a plan, at the centre of decision making and planning.

Notable activities and impact this year included: Child centred practice approaches for assessment, planning and review. Child's participation in their child protection (CP)

conference - Twelve children attended their CP conference, and 8 gave feedback. The majority said they were happy or very happy with their conference, scaling at 9/10 or 10/10 for all aspects. Views expressed by children after their conference led to improvement actions including ensuring that the child's feedback goes immediately to the Chair of the conference and is actioned before the next meeting, finding child and family friendly conference venues.

Child's participation in their Looked after Children review - Ninety nine percent of reviews for looked after children were conducted within the statutory timescale, 99% of Looked after Children participated in their review, and 68% of these attended the meeting and spoke for themselves. Foster Carer Review - views expressed by foster carers' children during this process led to a number of improvement actions to ensure that carers are meeting the needs of their own children. Let's Talk - views expressed to foster carers by their looked after child during this process were shared with the children's social workers to inform individual casework.

Young people's youth justice self-assessment - views expressed by a young person during this process enabled the Serious Organised Crime project team to identify a suitably engaging work experience placement.

Advocacy support for children and young people in care or on a child protection (CP) plan. Jigsaw 4u commissioned advocacy service supported 53 children on a CP plan and 45 looked after children. One young person said: 'My advocate got my opinions out loud, made people listen to me and got what I asked for'.

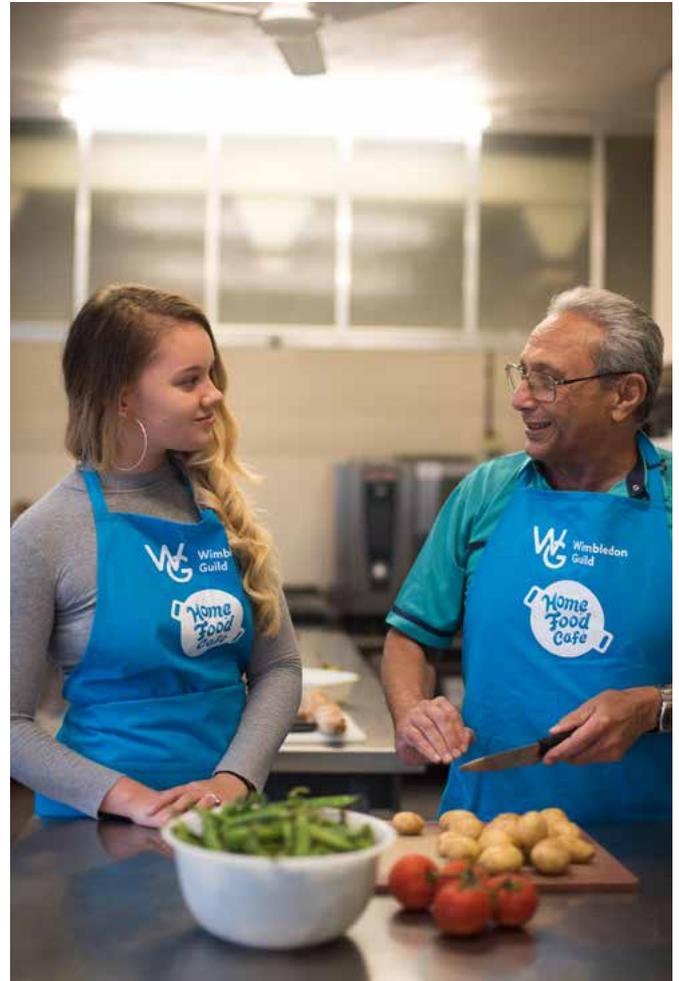
'User voice' included in case audit process. Bi monthly audit of children's plans June 2018 ('Stepdown'; CIN, CP, LAC and 'pathway' audits) identified very good evidence of children and families' engagement in the development of the plan. For example, in response to a child's views, their plan was escalated to the CP process, and in another a CP plan remained in place because a parent said that her family needed more support. As part of the audit process, a young person fed back that she is aware of the LAC plan and is happy with it, her social worker listens to her and she feels she can always speak to her if she is not happy about any aspect of her care plan. Audit of casework of the 0-5 Supporting Families Team identified good evidence of 'persistence in engaging families in the intervention'. It also identified an improvement action to ensure that actions set during supervision are shared with parents.

Commitment Four - Think Family: enabling families, parents and carers to influence change, which empowers them to manage their own affairs, impact decisions about their children and ultimately deliver better outcomes.

Notable activities and impact this year included:

Families influencing casework and case reviews. Signs of Safety child and family centred casework practice approach enabled a parent to use 'words and pictures' to explain to her children how her mental health had impacted on her ability to be a parent. The parent initially said the process was 'a waste of time', but now she sees 'what a difference it has made'.

Parent participation in CP Conferences Twenty two of the 27 parents who gave feedback on their initial or review CP conference rated their level of satisfaction as 8/10 or above, regarding



how well their child's views informed the meeting. Actions are in place to collect samples of qualitative feedback after conference especially to investigate reasons for low satisfaction.

The Foster Carers Survey 2018 highlighted a number of recommendations for improvements to our fostering service related to training for children's social work teams, fostering payments, placements, and carer retention.

Feedback from users on their level of satisfaction with services: Central London Community Health Care 'patient reported experience measures' show that 99% of patients said they were treated with respects, and 94% would recommend the service.

Early Years, childcare and children centres service review states that 95% of families said they had experienced improved outcomes after attending a service or programme. 100% reported improved

outcomes after attending a parenting programme. 'I feel comfortable sharing my worries and it made me feel more confident as a parent'.

Adoption and Permanence Team bi-annual report states that adopters are positive about their experience of each stage of the adoption process – 'we were allowed to progress at our own pace with a great deal of support and clarification'.

The Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub received positive feedback from professionals during this year's MSCB conference who said that the service is available, supportive, clear on thresholds, and gives feedback on the outcome of the referral.

Commitment Five – Building capacity across the Children's Trust to engage in good quality, ethical and impactful 'user voice' activity, the learning from which is shared with all stakeholders, including participants.

Notable activities and impact this year included:

Processes in place to support meaningful and ethical participation in commissioned and partner services Kids First forum has refreshed its good practice guidance which clearly states its role to independently represent the voice of children with SEND and their families.

The EHC plan process has been reviewed to ensure that it captures the views of children and families.

Commissioned services contract monitoring processes collects quarterly information from services on their user voice activity and impact; this is reported annually.

Outcome of user voice activity communicated within organisations, across the Children's Trust, and to participants. Central London Community Health Care put together 'patient stories', the key learning from which is shared at senior management meetings. In response to one patient story the children and young people's occupational therapy (OT) team are taking forward actions to raise awareness of children's OT needs in schools.

Newsletters – a number of service areas share information with users via a regular newsletter, this includes South West London Adoption Consortium (SWLAC), and Kids First parent forum. Young Merton Together termly online magazine shares 'user voice' good practice articles across the Children's Trust.

Whilst the summary above gives a brief overview of much of the activity undertaken throughout the year, it is not possible to include everything, or the level of detail about some of the engagement that has been undertaken.

What we hope this demonstrates is Merton's commitment to listen, learn from and respond to the voice and experiences of children and their families across all agencies that work with children and their families.

10.0

Conclusions and Priorities for 2019–21 Business Years

In June 2019, the MSCB will be dissolved and will be replaced by the Merton Safeguarding Children's Partnership. In Merton, Partners see this development as an opportunity to work together more effectively in very challenging contexts. We face a number of significant challenges going forward, these include having to manage increasing demands on services with reducing budgets; managing significant organisational change, as well as responding to national issues such as Brexit. As we make the transition from a LSCB into a Statutory Safeguarding Children Partnership, Merton is in a strong position to provide leadership and assurance in high quality, child and family-centred safeguarding practice across all agencies, whilst being focused on achieving excellence through partnership.

The forthcoming Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership's agreed priorities for 2019-2021 business years are outlined as follows:

1. Early Help

Early Help: is part of a whole system approach and is based on a clear understanding of local need. Good early help will mean that children and their families will experience a high quality and coordinated service that meets their assessed needs and prevents issues from escalating into a safeguarding risk. The Partnership's priority is to ensure that there is clear coordination and quality assurance of early help; with effective integration between the Early Help and the MASH and First Response services with a shared focus on the journey and experience of the child and family.



2. Think family: Domestic Abuse and Neglect

'Think Family' represents our joined up approach to working with families, both children and adults, so that families' needs are assessed holistically and there is a coordinated response to assessed needs. We ask colleagues in adult services to 'See the Adult; See the Child', understanding that adults in need of support, who are also parents, may need specific support to parent well. We ask colleagues in children's services to understand that the solutions to our concerns about children's wellbeing may lie in ensuring that adult services are meeting the needs of their parents. Our work in relation to Think Family covers a broad range of issues that impact on family life, but for the purposes of this business plan is focused on effectively responding the following two forms of harm:

- a) Think Family: Domestic Abuse:** our priority is to protect children who are at risk of domestic abuse by working effectively with families, including victims and perpetrators of abuse to create and sustain a safe parenting environment. The MSCP will monitor, coordinate and evaluate the work of partner agencies to help and protect parents and children at risk of domestic abuse. This work includes effective coordination of the work with other multi-agency groups that have responsibility for responding to domestic abuse.
- b) Think Family: Neglect:** our priority is to help children who are at risk of being neglected by their parents or carers. The partnership will monitor, coordinate and evaluate the work of all agencies to ensure that children at risk of neglect receive help and protection and that parents and carers are supported to meet children's needs.

3. Contextual Safeguarding

The Partnership will work with all agencies to ensure that there is a highly coordinated multi-agency and whole-council approach to a range of adolescent risks that occur in contexts beyond the family home (e.g. neighbourhood, schools, local shopping centres, youth venues etc.). These risks include child criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, serious youth violence, peer on peer abuse, harmful sexual behaviour and other overlapping forms of harm. The Partnership is aware of the risks of exploitation in their local area.

This Business Plan contains the MSCP priority actions. The on-going work of the MSCP and its Sub-Groups and Task Groups continues alongside it and will be incorporated into the Sub-Groups' annual work plans and reporting cycle to the MSCP.



Appendix 1

Merton Safeguarding Children Board Business Plan 2018-19

Progress of this Plan is updated monthly & monitored at each MSCB Meeting

Introduction

Merton Safeguarding Children Board aims to ensure that local services work knowledgeably, effectively and together to safeguard children and young people and to support their parents.

As part of our continuous improvement approach the Board has identified some key development priorities for 2016/17, these have been extended to 2018 and 2019. These are linked to our business as usual work plan undertaken by the MSCB and its sub groups. Alongside these priorities we are also seeking to improve our Quality Assurance and Learning and Improvement System to ensure that there is clear understanding of the complexity of work to protect children at the frontline. The Board continues to seek to improve its links to practitioners and their managers as part of our quality assurance processes to inform service improvement and development as well as maintaining our strong focus on the Voice of the Child/Young person.



Priorities for this business year are:

1 *Managing the arrangements for the transition from Merton Local Safeguarding Children Board to the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership*

In 2019 the Board will see the dissolution of LSCBs and the establishment of Safeguarding Partnerships. In addition to reviewing the progress that the Board has made to date, we will need to develop clear plans about the future shape and direction of the Board.

The MSCB is Outstanding with no recommendations regarding improvements. Building from a secure base, the Board has agreed not to radically change its constitution but to use the Children and Social Care Act 2017 as an opportunity to strengthen our partnership to ensure that safeguarding children remains a priority for all partners in our safeguarding system and to ensure that there is the most effective representation from statutory and other key partners in the work of safeguarding Merton's children and families and promoting their welfare.

At the Board's Away day it was agreed that a task and finish group would be established to propose the arrangements for the establishment of Safeguarding Partnership.

2 *Think Family - to support children and adults in our most vulnerable families to reduce risk and ensure improved outcomes.*

A great deal of work has been undertaken to embed Think Family as an approach to interventions with children and families across both adults and children's services. We are making good progress in ensuring that our partnerships enable the most vulnerable families to be supported; that vulnerable parents are enabled to care for their children and children are in turn receive the care they need to thrive and achieve their potential.

Evidence from local and national research tells us that our most vulnerable parents/families are those who:

- Experience poor mental health
- Struggle with substance misuse
- Are affected by domestic abuse
- Parents with learning difficulties that may affect their ability to respond to the changing needs of their children

The evidence nationally and locally also shows that vulnerable families are best supported when there is effective joint working between adult and children facing services. When professionals understand the underlying causes of issues like neglect and other form of abuse and offer effective support early before these problems get worse.

Building on this work, the Board is seeking to drive improvements in our practice with vulnerable families so that stigma is reduced and families with poor mental health and substance misuse issues will feel confident in seeking help and support. We are also assure ourselves that practitioners are supported with the skills and confident to engage with all of families including:

- Families who are difficult to engage
- Families who are challenging (for a variety of reasons including social class – evidence from practice and SCRs show that affluent families can pose distinct challenges to multi-agency safeguarding systems resulting in harm to children; families who present as ‘powerful’ etc.)

The Board is also seeking to further strengthen the role of education, as they are a critical part of the team around the family.

3 Supporting Vulnerable Adolescents – adolescence is a time of significant change for all young people.

We know that, for some young people, adolescence is a time of particular vulnerability. We are determined to support adolescents who are at risk of:

- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE),
- Children who go missing from home/school/care
- Children and young people who are at risk radicalisation and violent extremism,
- Children at risk of serious youth violence and gangs
- Children at risk of criminal and other forms of exploitation including county lines, peer on peer abuse and harmful sexual behaviour.
- Self-harm and poor mental health para-suicide

The Board is seeking to develop a strategic response to Contextual Safeguarding. In particular we are seeking to development a coordinated response to adolescent risk/harm which occurs outside of the family home in spaces such as the neighbourhood, school, community centres and housing estates.

The Board would also like to be more systematic regarding its work in listening to children and allowing them to shape the services that are provided to them. The Merton User Voice Strategy outlines the variety of ways in which the views and opinions of children and young people are considered. The Board would like this to be more coordinated so that the impact of our work with children, young people and their families can be measured more effectively.

4 Early Help – To develop an early help system that is responsive and effectively prevents escalation of concerns.

Merton has reviewed its Children Young People and Families Well-Being Model. We are now reviewing our Early Help and Preventative work; in particular we are exploring models for coordinating preventative and early help across the well-being model. As part of our review we will:

- Consider the interface between our MASH and EH arrangements
- Review our service offer at all levels of the Model and Engage partners in discussion on thresholds, clarify Step-Up Step Down processes and the tools to support early help assessment CASA and intervention (Signs of Safety/signs of well-being)
- Review our partnership quality assurance of EH

Addressing the incidence and impact of neglect is a cross-cutting theme that runs across the work of the Board and each of our priorities.

This Business Plan contains the MSCB priority actions. The on-going work of the MSCB and its Sub-Groups and Task Groups continues alongside it and will be incorporated into the Sub-Groups' annual work plans and reporting cycle to the MSCB.

New priorities may be added during the year, including any identified risks which will be monitored in the confidential risk log below.

The Plan will be updated and presented to each MSCB meeting by the Board Manager for monitoring and exception reporting.



Objectives		Outcomes	Actions (who and what)		Resources	
					Governance/oversight	When?
1.1	The purpose of this task and finish group is to draft a constitution/ partnership agreement for the Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership and to propose a partnership agreement which will form the legal basis for the partnership.	<p>The new partnership to consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Partners b) Relevant agencies • Geographical Footprint • Leadership and governance? • Independent Scrutiny • Quality Assurance • Training and Practice Development • Funding • Dispute Resolution • Listening and responding to children 	<p>The Independent Chair</p> <p>Assistant Director of Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion</p> <p>The Director of Education</p> <p>Senior Representative from the Police</p> <p>Senior Representative from the CCG</p> <p>Senior Representation from Housing</p> <p>MSCB Business Manager</p>	<p>A task and finish group comprised of key partners are to explore options and propose a draft partnership agreement to the Board for sign off</p>	<p>The MSCB partnership and Strategic Boards</p> <p>CCG Rep</p> <p>MPS BCU Rep</p> <p>Education Rep</p> <p>CSC Rep</p> <p>Housing Rep</p> <p>HWBB Rep</p> <p>Lead Member</p>	<p>January 2019; with a view to the Board being dissolved 31st March 2019 and constituted as a safeguarding partnership from 1st April 2019</p>

Objectives		Outcomes	Actions (who and what)		Resources	
					Governance/oversight	When?
2.1	To embed the Think Family Approach across the multi-agency partnership	<p>We want to make it easier for all types of families to access help and support without stigma or blame.</p> <p>Especially families experiencing DVA, mental health, substance misuse, disability</p>	<p>To approve the DVA Strategy</p> <p>To Implement the Mental Health Protocol</p> <p>To approve and implement a Parental Substance Misuse Protocol</p> <p>To approve Protocol for Supporting Parents with disabilities</p>	<p>The Think Family Strategic Board to further embed multi-agency work across adult and children's services</p> <p>Think family Coordinator</p> <p>Policy Sub-Group</p> <p>Substance Misuse Commissioned Service</p>	Policy Sub-Group	January 2019
		<p>We want all our practitioners to be skilled at working with all types of families and are positive at engaging with them</p>	<p>To review our training offer to ensure that practitioners have access to appropriate training</p> <p>To seek assurance from agencies that supervisory arrangements provide support with regard to authoritative practice with families</p>	<p>Learning and Development Sub-Group</p> <p>Section 11 and challenge Process</p>	Learning and Development Sub-Group	<p>January 2019</p> <p>May - June 2018</p>
		<p>We work well with schools and educational institutions as they are a key part of the team around families</p>	<p>To work with schools and educational establishments to ensure that they have the capacity and confidence to lead preventative multi-agency safeguarding</p>	Schools Representatives	<p>Learning and Development Sub-Group</p> <p>Policy Sub-Group</p> <p>PPYPS</p>	January 2019

Objectives		Outcomes	Actions (who and what)		Resources	
					Governance/oversight	When?
2.2	The MSCB is assured of the multi-agency awareness of neglect and its impact and the quality of frontline practice in cases of neglect	For the MSCB to undertake a re-audit of neglect	What	Who	QA Sub-Group and BIG Head CSC & YI QA Chair Paul Angeli	March 2018
		To feedback key practice lessons from the audit	QA Sub-Group and MSCB partners to conduct a multi-agency audit of neglect cases	All relevant MSCB partners including Health (CCG, CLCH, acute trusts, Mental Health Trust), Education, Police, CSC, Voluntary Orgs.		
		To integrate these lessons into current training and practice development initiatives	To add Neglect to the Section 11 Self-audit			
		To have in place a range of approved practice tools to address the incidence of neglect	MSCB to adopt and promote a range of practice tools to address neglect	Carla Thomas CSC Health Police Education Early Years	Policy and Learning and Development Sub-Groups MSCB BSU	March 2018
		For the Board to be assured that there is a clear link between the work on neglect including the trigger trio and Think Family	Multi-agency partners to demonstrate an understanding neglect as an effect, with the trigger trio, in many cases, being the cause	MSCB partners including, SAB Health (CCG, CLCH, acute trusts, Mental Health Trust), Public Health Education, Police, CSC, Voluntary Orgs.	Policy and Quality Assurance Sub-Group Chair	March 2018

Objectives		Outcomes	Actions (who and what)		Resources	
					Governance/oversight	When?
3.1	Listening and responding to the voices of children and young people	<p>We listen to young people and their lived experience</p> <p>We will identify coordinate the various ways in which we hear from young people and ensure that the Board has oversight. We will also ensure that the voice of the child and the family is heard in the commissioning and delivery of services</p>	The BIG	<p>To review the user voice strategy</p> <p>For the Board to agree on-going ways to secure the voice and experience of the child in the work of the Board</p>	MSCB	January 2019
3.2	We understand ASD and social communication disorders and provide appropriate support to children and families and practitioners	To ensure that the Board is sighted on the Implementation of the ASD Strategy	CAMHs Transformation Group	To ensure that the risks to children and young people with ASD are managed effectively	PPYPS	January 2019
3.3	Promoting Good Mental Health for Adolescents (12-18 year-olds)	<p>We support good adolescent mental health and emotional well-being - we are clear on the difference between 'normal' adolescent behaviour, inappropriate behaviour needing a parental response and adolescent mental health</p> <p>We want to strengthen the link between commissioned services, schools and families (where appropriate)</p>	<p>All agencies</p> <p>Commissioners and commissioned services</p> <p>Secondary Schools</p>	<p>Promote good mental health to more children and young people across the safeguarding system.</p> <p>Champion the voices of Merton young people and parents to influence mental health policy and practice.</p> <p>To work with commissioners and commissioned services to ensure effective, integrated services</p>	PPYPS Sub-Group	
3.4	Reducing Incidents of Self-harm and preventing adolescent suicide	We prevent self-harm and suicide	<p>CAMHs</p> <p>PPYPS</p> <p>Acute Trusts</p> <p>Red Thread</p>	<p>To review the implementation of the Self-harm Protocol</p> <p>To develop a Suicide Prevention Strategy</p>	PPYP and Policy Sub-Groups	

Objectives		Outcomes	Actions (who and what)		Resources	
					Governance/oversight	When?
3.5	Developing a Strategic response to Contextual Safeguarding	<p>We have an effective contextual safeguarding response to adolescent risk including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSE • gangs and county lines, serious youth violence • peer on peer abuse • harmful sexual behaviour • adolescent substance misuse 	PPYPS YJT Transforming Families MPS	<p>To develop a contextual safeguarding strategy</p> <p>To ensure that the strategy is underpinned by a process to manage and review adolescent risk related to peers, space and place</p>	PPYPS	January 2019

Objectives		Outcomes	Actions (who and what)		Resources	
					Governance/oversight	When?
4.1	Skilled and coordinated Prevention at all levels of need	Effective coordination and QA of early help	Early Help Task and Finish Group	To propose a model for adoption by the Board	BIG	March 2019
		Aligning assessment tools	Early Help Task and Finish Group	To develop a multi-agency assessment and intervention tool that is aligned to the MWBM and the Social Work Practice Model	BIG	March 2019
		Integrating signs of safety as a part of a preventative response (a shared language and approach for families, professionals and services)	Signs of Safety Steering Group	To develop a multi-agency assessment and intervention tool that is aligned to the MWBM and the Social Work Practice Model	BIG	March 2019
		Ensuring effective preventative services at all levels of the MWBM	Early Help Task and Finish Group	To develop a multi-agency assessment and intervention tool that is aligned to the MWBM and the Social Work Practice Model	BIG	March 2019

Appendix 3

Proposed Membership

Executive Group Membership	
The Independent Person (Attends as required by Statutory Partners)	
SP	The Accountable Officer of Merton Clinical Commissioning Group - (or their delegated representative)
SP	BCU, Commander Metropolitan Police (or their delegated representative)
SP	Chief Executive, London Borough of Merton (or their delegated representative)
SGC	Sub Group Chairs may be asked to attend the Executive Group if the business of their sub group is on the agenda.

Relevant Agencies	
Agency	Representative
Acute Trust/Health Provider	Director of Nursing, SW London & St George's Mental Health Trust
Acute Trust/Provider	Chief Nurse, St George's Healthcare NHS Trust
Acute Trust/Provider	Chief Nurse, Epsom & St. Helier NHS Trust
Acute Trust/Provider	Clinical Director, SW London & St Georges CAMHS service
Community Health Service	Director of Nursing, Community Health Services
Housing	Registered Social Landlord Representative
London Borough of Merton (Housing)	Housing Needs Manager, Community & Housing
London Probation - Community Rehabilitation Company	Assistant Chief Officer, The London Community Rehabilitation Company Limited (or their delegated representative)
Merton Education	Primary School Representative
Merton Education	Special School Representative
Merton Education	Secondary School Representative
Merton Education	Independent Sector School Representative
Merton Education	Further Education College Representative
National Probation Service	Regional Safeguarding Lead
NHS Merton CCG	Named General Practitioner for Child Protection, Merton CCG
NHS Merton CCG	Designated Doctor for Child Protection, Merton CCG
NHS Merton CCG	Designated Nurse Safeguarding, Merton CCG

Co-opted Members	
Agency	Representative
London Borough of Merton	Lead Member Children's Services
London Borough of Merton	The Head of Community Safety
Community Representative	Lay Members (Two)
Department for Work and Pensions	Representative
London Borough of Merton	Director of Public Health
London Borough of Merton	Head of Service, Policy, Performance and Partnership
London Borough of Merton (Adults)	Safeguarding Adults Manager, Community & Housing
London Borough of Merton	Assistant Director of CSC & YI, CSF
London Borough of Merton	Assistant Director of Education
NHS England (to be sent papers for information and consultation)	Head of Quality (South London) and Safeguarding (London)
BS, A	MSCP Policy and Development Manager
BS	MSCP Administrator/s

Statutory Partners will ensure that the voice and concerns of schools, colleges and other educational providers are taken into account, as appropriate, at Executive meetings of the Partnership.

Contact Details

Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership

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